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**THE MEDIUM AND THE MESSAGE:
AFRO-CUBAN TRANCE AND WESTERN THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE**

by

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Volume 1 of 2

Christopher Floyd Danowski

**The Medium and the Message:
Afro-Cuban Trance and Western Theatrical Performance**

Abstract

The Medium and the Message investigates the incorporation of Afro-Cuban trance techniques in Western theatrical performance. Through art practice and research, I am asking two questions: how do performers, trained in Western theatrical contexts, articulate their experience with Afro-Cuban trance techniques? And how can my research methodologies illuminate the inherent intercultural tensions in ways that are productive for performance practitioners and theorists? To answer these questions, I created four new works of theatrical performance where I developed a method for performers, utilizing Afro-Cuban rituals adapted for non-practitioners. Working toward a phenomenological understanding of what is happening when a performer incorporates a character, I drew on the ritual knowledge of trance possession in Lukumí and Palo Monte in order to examine how ontologies might speak to each other in artistic practice. I also served as advisor for the creation of a fifth work in order to test the method outside of my studio. I constructed a studio practice methodology, called *kanga* (from the Bantu for *tying and untying*), using three methods based on aspects of Afro-Cuban ritual, and modified for performance contexts: spell, charm, and trance. This methodology enacts and complicates distinctions between performance and ritual, serving as a contribution to respectful and responsible intercultural performance practices. My research-led practice includes autobiographical writing and auto-ethnography under a phenomenological research methodology that uses three methods for data collection: formal recorded interviews, video footage of the studio work, and regular rehearsal debriefings. The overall methodology, bridging theory and practice, is bricoleur, drawing from ethnography, psychoanalytic theory, and phenomenology. Both research and studio work led to the articulation of a state of consciousness in performance that I call *hauntological*. This borrows from Derrida (1994: 10) but is redefined to refer to a state of being where reality is co-constituted by the living and the dead, where ancestral spirits are invoked to do the work once reserved for characters. Finally, this led to the construction of a creative artifact called *The Ghost Lounge*, an art work that evokes a hauntological state of consciousness in the viewer.

Table of Contents

VOLUME I: THESIS

Abstract	iii
List of images.....	ix
Acknowledgements	x
Author's Declaration	xiv
Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line	1
Origins.....	1
Methodology.....	5
Selection and Safeguards.....	9
Audience and Contribution.....	11
Organization.....	12
Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror	15
Prologue.....	19
Scene 1: Lukumí.....	21
Scene 2: Palo Monte.....	26
Scene 3: Trance.....	30
Conclusion.....	42
Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums	44
Performer Training Today: A Method for the Medium.....	44
Toward a Phenomenology of Performing.....	52
Toward a Responsible Interculturality.....	57
Precedents/Problems.....	61
Precedents/Models.....	63
Toward an Ethical Ritual and Performance Practice.....	66
Spell.....	69
Charm.....	71
Trance.....	74
Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts	78

History of TIMB and Howl.....	79
Roots and Contexts.....	81
My Generation: Woosters and RATs and Zapatistas.....	84
Current Contexts.....	88
Performance Style.....	89
Presentation Modes.....	90
The Texts.....	92
Chapter Four: The Monsters	95
Monsters of the Sea I: How I Lost Your Mother in the Underworld.....	97
1. Rehearsal Director's Notes.....	97
2. Dramaturg's Notes.....	99
3. Director/Writer's Notes.....	99
4. Ritual Director's Notes.....	100
5. Technician of the Sacred's Notes.....	102
6. Artistic Director's Notes.....	103
Monsters of the Sea II: romeo&juliet/VOID.....	106
1. Rehearsal Director's Notes.....	106
2. Dramaturg's Notes.....	108
3. Director/Writer's Notes.....	109
4. Ritual Director's Notes.....	110
5. Technician of the Sacred's Notes.....	111
6. Artistic Director's Notes.....	114
Monsters of the Sea III: endofplay.....	117
1. Rehearsal Director's Notes.....	117
2. Dramaturg's Notes.....	118
3. Director/Writer's Notes.....	120
4. Ritual Director's Notes.....	121
5. Technician of the Sacred's Notes.....	123
6. Artistic Director's Notes.....	124
Monsters of the Sea IV: Hotel Athena.....	130

1. Rehearsal Director's Notes.....	130
2. Dramaturg's Notes.....	131
3. Writer's Notes.....	132
4. Ritual Director's Notes.....	133
5. Technician of the Sacred's Notes.....	135
6. Artistic Director's Notes.....	137
Monsters of the Sea V: Our Kiki: A Gay Farce.....	139
1. Rehearsal Director's Notes.....	139
2. Dramaturg's Notes.....	139
3. Director/Writer's Notes.....	140
4. Ritual Director's Notes.....	140
5. Technician of the Sacred's Notes.....	142
6. Artistic Director's Notes.....	142
Untying and Retying the Kanga Line: On Methodology and Method in Performance Practice.....	144
Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation.....	148
Notes on Methodology and Research Design.....	147
Ancestors.....	153
Seeing Things.....	155
Hearing Things.....	157
Mirror.....	158
Trance.....	160
Character.....	170
Notes on Results.....	178
The Kanga Method: Aide-Mémoire.....	183
Chapter Six: Through the Looking-Glass.....	190
<i>The Ghost Lounge: Against Capture</i>	190
The Video Performance.....	192
0. Untying.....	195
1. Conceiving.....	195

2. Gathering.....	195
3. Consulting.....	196
4. Conceiving.....	198
5. Sweeping.....	199
6. Tying.....	202
Toward Hauntology: Chasing Ghosts.....	203
Another Phenomenology of Performance: Third Verse, Not the Same as the First.....	205
Lacandomblé: The Haunted Screen, the Haunted Mirror.....	208
Seeing and Hearing: Encore.....	209
The Projection Screen.....	213
Through the Screen and into the Mirror.....	217
Kanga Decoded: Toward a Haunted Performance.....	222
Liminality.....	223
Increased Awareness.....	224
Reflective Flow.....	226
Theatricality.....	227
On Ghosting.....	228
Conclusion: The Medium is a Messenger.....	231
Retying the Threads.....	231
Medium and Media.....	233
The Tools and the Capture.....	237
Research Design: Flaws.....	240
Contributions to Knowledge.....	241
Future Research.....	244
Bibliography.....	246
VOLUME 2: APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Performer Interviews.....	1
STEVE.....	1
LIANA.....	5

SETH.....	14
JAMIE.....	20
HEATHER.....	27
BETH MAY.....	36
BETHANNE.....	40
OUR KIKI.....	45
Appendix B: Practitioner Interviews.....	53
ISIS.....	53
GAVIN.....	55
ROBERT.....	58
CARLA.....	61
Appendix C: Interview Questions.....	64
Performer Questions.....	64
Practitioner Questions.....	66
Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook.....	68
Appendix E: The Play Texts.....	102
MOTS1: How I Lost Your Mother in the Underworld.....	102
MOTS2: romeo&juliet/VOID.....	155
MOTS3: endofplay.....	191
MOTS4: Hotel Athena.....	240
Appendix F: The Ghost Lounge: Performance Text.....	268

LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1. Performing television. Julio-Cesar Saucedo and Jonathan Hernandez as Marshall and Lily.....	97
Image 2. Casting the spell. Liana O'Boyle as the Narrator.....	97
Image 3. Media as nostalgia. Osiris Cuen as Robin/Eurydice.....	99
Image 4. Stealing from Godard. Jonathan Hernandez.....	101
Image 5. Double personas. Jamie Haas Hendricks and Liana O'Boyle.....	103
Image 6. Performer as ghost. Heather Lee Harper as Susan.....	105
Image 7. Reframing Shakespeare. Seth Scott as Mercutio and Joseph Von Frechen as Romeo. Jamie Haas Hendricks and Heather Lee Harper are holding the light and the frame.....	108
Image 8. The forgotten other. Jamie Haas Hendricks as Roslyn.....	110
Image 9. Invoking the spirit through spinning. Seth Scott, Liana O'Boyle, Heather Lee Harper, Jamie Haas Hendricks, and Joseph Von Frechen in the closing ritual.....	111
Image 10. Flirtation as language. Jamie Hendricks as SHE3PO and Stephen Kass as HE.....	112
Image 11. Confessions of a dog. Beth May as DOG.....	113
Image 12. Living through mirror reflections. Heather Lee Harper, Stephen Kass, and Jamie Hendricks.....	121
Image 13. Performing the psychotherapeutic. Jamie Haas Hendricks.....	123
Image 14. Reclaiming Narcissus and becoming Oshun. Heather Lee Harper.....	125
Image 15. Meeting self as other. Heather Lee Harper and Jamie Hendricks.....	127
Image 16. Love is a hall of mirrors. Jamie Hendricks.....	128
Image 17. Dancing the moon. Heather Lee Harper as Athena.....	131
Image 18. Beginning the fire dance. Heather Harper as Athena and Steve Kass as the Concierge.....	133
Image 19. Immersion into media. Liana O'Boyle and Seth Scott.....	135
Image 20. Media writing on the live (and vice versa) Liana O'Boyle (barely visible) and Seth Scott (Heather Lee Harper in projection).....	137
Image 21. Last moments of Athena. Heather Lee Harper.....	138

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That's the first thing you need to know, really. And the last thing you need to know. This is a love story.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the Plymouth University has not formed part of any other degree either at Plymouth University or at another establishment.

This research has been conducted under a formal agreement with Transart Institute, for which a joint award will be awarded.

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A programme of advanced study was undertaken, which included: research methods, artistic research, artifact, context, proposal, research writing, conflict, subjectivity, exposition, and strategies for survival.

Relevant seminars and conferences were attended at which work was often presented; external institutions were visited for consultation purposes and several papers prepared for publication.

Publications (or presentation of other forms of creative and performing work):
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Signed

.....Christopher Danowski.....

Date

.....8 June, 2017.....

Introduction:

Performance on the Kalunga Line

Origins

A theatre which, abandoning psychology, recounts the extraordinary, puts on the stage natural conflicts, natural and subtle forces, and which presents itself first of all as an exceptional force of redirection. A theatre which produces trances. (Sontag, 1976: 259)

This 'mysterious power which everyone senses and no philosopher explains' is, in sum, the spirit of the earth. (Lorca, 1998: 49)

For *The Medium and the Message*, I tested performance in altered states of consciousness, drawing on techniques from the Afro-Cuban systems Lukumí and Palo Monte (of which I am an initiate), and modifying them for performers who have training in Western theatrical traditions. At its roots, this investigation concerns ontological differences, and how these differences might generate something out of conversation and collision. Through such conversations and collisions, I found ways of making intercultural work.

I began with a concept: that the character inhabits the performer, in a way that is similar to how an ancestor or spirit inhabits the medium. I created four new works of live performance, where I wrote the text and acted as the ritual guide. I also served as director for two of these works, and performed in two. This led to the development of Kanga, a performance methodology where the performer is accessing character through ritual processes derived

Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line

from Lukumí and Palo Monte. There was also a fifth work, for which I served as a ritual consultant, in order to test the methodology in contexts where there might not be an initiate present.

The thesis title alludes to McLuhan's *The Medium is the Message* (1996), and his notion that 'all media are extensions of some human faculty—psychic or physical' (1996: 26). In this case, there is a play on words, where *medium* signifies the intervening substance, the tool that translates a form from one state to another, and the spiritual medium as the intervening subject that translates the words of the dead to the living (and vice versa). Further, I am pointing out in the title that the act of mediumship is a message, but it is not *the* message. There is a tendency to get caught up in the formalities of mediumship (Is this real? Are there invisible strings?) rather than pay attention to the message (What are the spirits telling us?).

The origins of this project came from a number of different threads. I had been acting for a few years when I was fourteen, and was becoming fascinated with Jungian psychology. My mom thought I would get something out of taking a workshop with her. This workshop was given by Robert Johnson, a psychotherapist, who had written a couple of books, *He* and *She* (1977) and was teaching on Active Imagination. This was a method Johnson had developed through Jungian concepts for accessing one's active archetypes through meditation and spontaneous writing. I started to write, thoughts and energies taking the form of characters. Through high school and into my sophomore year in college, I started spending less time on stage, and more

Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line

time in my room, writing in notebooks. When I was on stage I saw things, and when I was writing I heard voices.

A couple of years later my friend Todd Hetherington was teaching me past-life regression hypnosis. When he hypnotized me for the first time, I felt like I was simultaneously completely relaxed and performing. I was seeing things and talking about them, and I was also observing myself talking about them, criticizing my own performance as if I were playing a role. I was in two places at once. Later, Todd taught me how to hypnotize others. I would sometimes practice on my friends at parties, and I seemed to have a knack for it. I decided to try these hypnotic techniques on myself when I was acting. I was playing the role of Danforth in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, his critique of the McCarthy hearings through the metaphor of the Salem witch trials. The role seemed to come effortlessly and the world of the play had a peculiar clarity, which, frankly, scared me.

There was a confluence of events in 2008. I had just been initiated as an *Olorisha* of Obatala in the Lukumí tradition. The year following the ceremony is called the *yaboraje*, when you are considered to be a newborn. You have to dress in white from head to foot for the year. There are a number of other prohibitions including no going out at night, no exposure to wind or rain, eating all meals seated on the floor with a spoon, and no looking into mirrors. The mirrors were interesting to me, because I was starting to read Jacques Lacan's theories of the mirror in relation to the birth of self-consciousness (Lacan, 1991b: 223–224), and saw that despite different cultural contexts, there

Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line

were parallels in conception. I was experiencing what Lacan was describing, and I was not sure if anyone had ever made the connection before.

I was not the first, however. I was on the phone one morning, having called Folk Cuba, an online *botánica* run by David Brown, PhD. His book *Santeria Enthroned* was recently published, and I was intimidated by his knowledge of the tradition. I was ordering things that are not easy to find in Phoenix, and we started to chat. When I told him I was in my yaboraje, he made the casual comment that I was in a Lacanian pre-mirror phase. I was not sure I had heard correctly, so I asked him to clarify. He talked about how he and a friend of his in the religion were theorizing about Lacan's mirror, as a metaphor for the birth of consciousness, and how yawos (the title given to initiates in their first year) are considered to be in the early stages of a new consciousness.

I hung up feeling dizzy. So it wasn't just me. These are ontologies that seem entirely disconnected, but something about the mirror speaks to both in a similar way. That began a journey that has taken a few twists and turns since then. The ontologies do not necessarily fit together comfortably, but they do have something to say to each other.

This written document, *The Ghost Lounge* (the video that accompanies this thesis, serving as both demonstration of documentation and art object), and the studio works are all part of an artistic research agenda whose subject is consciousness. Consciousnesses, like ideas, seem to run on parallel train tracks, and occasionally they intersect in (to me) surprising ways. I don't think the

Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line

intersections would be surprising to African gods, who have already seen it all anyway, and have already had an eternity to meditate on the texts that the mirror produces, reflects, distorts, and hides. When texts like these intersect, I'm prone to following the point of intersection as if it were a flashing light, trying to get my attention, and this one still hasn't stopped flashing.

Methodology

The Medium and the Message analyzes the subjective experience of Afro-Cuban trance in theatrical performance. Through art practice and research, I am asking two questions: how do performers, trained in Western theatrical contexts, articulate their experience with Afro-Cuban trance techniques? And how can my research methodologies illuminate the inherent intercultural tensions in ways that are productive for performance practitioners and theorists? The first question relates to different cultural perspectives, modes of being in the world, or ontology. The second relates to these ontologies in dialogue, focusing on the inherent intercultural tension embedded and enacted in performance practice. In some ways, the first relates to art practice and the second relates to research findings, but the relations are not simple. They do not stay in their own places for very long. There is, then, a methodology for the studio practice, and a methodology for my research findings, and a methodology that guides both of these.

Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line

The overall methodology, bridging theory and practice, is bricoleur.

Following Lévi-Strauss, magic and science are 'two parallel modes of acquiring knowledge' (1966: 13), and the bricoleur's methods serve for examining phenomena that leave their traces in structures of consciousness. The bricoleur draws from a variety of methods with the guiding philosophy to use 'whatever is at hand' (1966: 17). Within this, there are three methods: ethnography (drawing on rituals and beliefs of the practitioners of Lukumí and Palo Monte), psychoanalysis (drawing on Lacanian theories of Freud's conscious and unconscious), and phenomenology (drawing on the subjective experience of the participants in terms of how they relate to their worlds). Again following Lévi-Strauss, these methods are in the social and collective consciousness, 'sub-sets of the culture' (1966: 19) used to 'enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or deconstructions' (1966: 17). These are methods already at hand with which to study phenomena related to consciousness.

Part of my impulse for this work is to chase, or at least track, ghosts in some way. At first, I thought I might capture a ghost on video, in the moment before or after inhabiting the performer. After some reflection, I realized that I was not actually looking for a feather of proof, to determine whether a haunting was objectively verifiable, but instead determining if there is something in the experience of being inhabited that is articulable, and repeatable. I still wanted to track ghosts, but to track them through the traces in the structures of consciousness when a performer is perceiving ghosts.

Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line

Tracking the structures of consciousness is the stuff of phenomenology, which has served to guide my research. A phenomenological approach allows for the expression of the performer's subjective experience as a means of communicating an image of the world. In this case, the world under examination is not singular, but is, like the train station, a place of intersecting ontologies. I use three methods for data collection: formal recorded interviews (where I interview the participants who performed in my studio work, as well as ritual practitioners of African diasporic religion), video footage (from studio practice, in rehearsal and performance), and debriefings (through formal sessions with the performers after meditations). Questions about phenomenology and performance are woven throughout the chapters, beginning with a phenomenology of character, and finally leading to a mapping of interiority based in Lacanian concepts.

In the studio, the performer participants had Western performance training, and would be working with ritual techniques whose origins are in a traditional earth religion. This led to the studio practice methodology, called Kanga, which is of my own construction. I used three methods—spell, charm, and trance—based on aspects of Afro-Cuban ritual, and modified for performance contexts. Spell, charm, and trance worked together to help performers with Western training enter a space that was ontologically unfamiliar. It also had to be safe and appropriate for outsiders to these ritual traditions (and importantly, outsiders who were not interested in becoming insiders). There were other methods in use throughout the studio work, with

Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line

autobiographical writing to serve as a map for my own inner territory (since I understood that by putting performers under a spell, I would also be under its influence), a practice-led approach (to appropriately construct performance works based on the individuals' and group's needs throughout the evolution of the five studio projects) and auto-ethnography (drawing on my ritual knowledge and consultations with my ritual elders in order to construct a performance methodology that was both appropriate for the performer and respectful to the secrecy of the ritual practices).

Research and studio work led to the articulation of a state of consciousness in performance that I call *hauntological*. This term's roots come from Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*, to refer to an ontological state where 'one can never distinguish between the future-to-come and the coming back of a spectre' (1994: 35). Here, the spectre is Marx's influence on European thought, invoking a state of being on the dividing line between ghost and actual, where the ghost is that which has not been, or is no longer realized. This dividing line 'ought to be crossed, like utopia itself, by a realization, that is, by a revolution' (Derrida, 1994: 35). In Martin Hagglund's reading, the spectre is not exactly present, but exists between spaces of *no longer* and *not yet* (2008: 82). Mark Fisher follows this line, writing that the *no longer* exists in the present as a repetition, and the *not yet* is present as an anticipation (Fisher, 2012: 19). For Andrew Gallix, hauntology, 'itself haunted by a nostalgia for all our lost futures', extends naturally into art, where 'works of art are haunted, not only by the ideal forms of which they are imperfect instantiations, but also by what escapes

Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line

representation' (Gallix, 2011). The performer is in a present moment that is haunted by the ghosts of the no longer (who come back to occupy the performer's consciousness), and the not yet (who come with news from the past to be used in the present for the future). In many cases the messages are personal, carried in the moment in private communication between the performer and the haunting spirit, and in this way they resist and refuse representation. I am redefining hauntology to include ghosts in a more literal sense, referring to a state of being where reality is co-constituted by the living and the dead. My thinking through this concept resulted in the construction of a creative artifact called *The Ghost Lounge*, an artwork that evokes a way of being centered in hauntology. This artwork is included in my thesis, and there will be further instructions for viewing in later chapters.

Selection and Safeguards

The performer participants were nineteen individuals performing over the course of the five studio works (called, collectively, *Monsters of the Sea*, or MOTS). They were, for MOTS 1–4: Liana O'Boyle, Julio Cesar-Saucedo, Jonathan Hernandez, Jamie Hendricks, Osiris Cuen, Grace Daniels, Kerin Ashley Martinez, Heather Lee Harper, Joseph Von Frechen, Seth Scott, Stephen Kass, Beth May, and Bethanne Abramovich; and, for MOTS5: Zach Ragatz, Shannon Phelps, Kevin Wathey, Evan Carson, Nikko Thomas, and Adam Mendez, Jr. The common denominator for all of them was their

Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line

connection to university theatrical performance training in the southwestern United States. For MOTS5, the performers were cast by the director, Jake Jack Hylton, and for MOTS1–4, I selected the performers based on either previous experience, or professional recommendations as artists who had Western training and interest in non-Western practices.

For the practitioners, I chose Robert Johnson (not to be confused with the psychotherapist of the same name), my godfather in Lukumí, because of his background in theater and theology, and his initiatory knowledge of Lukumí (he was initiated, or crowned, in Cuba and has been practicing for more than twenty years), and Isis Costa McElroy, professor of Brazilian literature at Ohio State University, because of her background knowledge of Candomblé (the sister religion to Lukumí in Brazil), and her initiatory knowledge of Lukumí as an initiate in the United States. I also included Gavin Russom, because of his knowledge as an artist-practitioner. He is a child of Oshun, and an experimental electronic musician, whose knowledge helped me to negotiate the territory where art and spirituality intersect. I also interviewed my colleague Carla Melo, a performance artist and professor currently living in Canada, who grew up in Brazil within the Umbanda tradition (with spiritist practices that include ancestor possession).

There were safeguards in place, designed in conjunction with the Ethical Standards committee at Plymouth University. Confidentiality and disclosure standards applied to both groups, and safeguards for performance practices applied only to the performers. They were informed at the outset that there

Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line

was a possibility that they might enter a deeper state of trance. There were two safety precautions in place: there were always two performers not participating, and I checked in at every level of the encounter, to receive confirmation that they wished to continue. Other ethical standards in place included informed consent, openness and honesty in regard to my research findings, the right to withdraw at any stage, protection from physical and psychological harm, debriefings, and confidentiality standards following the protocols of the Data Protection Act.

Audience and Contribution

This thesis contains methods and methodologies for practitioners and scholars of theater and performance whose work is primarily intercultural. The thesis is also a contribution to the ongoing dialogue in performance studies concerning ritual and performance, especially in relation to ritual practices in non-Western cultures, or in situations of cultural collision. There are aspects of auto-ethnographic practice, psychoanalytic theory, and phenomenology of the performer's experience, but its primary contribution is toward filling a need in university performer training for its innovative conception and methods for understanding and creating character.

Organization

The first chapter, 'A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror', gives the reader background and context for Lukumí (more commonly known as Santería) and Palo Monte, the Afro-Cuban systems from which the ritual methods are drawn. I provide historical context for these African diasporic traditions, as they have moved from western and central Africa into the Americas and beyond. There is discussion of their belief systems, and details of my own involvement and position within these traditions. I give background on the rituals, centered around a discussion of ritual (vs. performance). There is a conceit to this chapter in the form of a play, introducing a multiplicity of voices that will occur throughout.

Chapter Two, 'Of Methods and Mediums', gives background on theater and performance training in universities in the United States, with some discussion of the distinctions peculiar to the Southwest. I continue the discussion of performance and ritual, centered on the performance side of the equation. I discuss performer training in relation to the phenomenology of character, and move to the application of ritual techniques to performers with Western training. This necessitates a discussion of ethics and interculturality in the application of ritual practices to performance.

In Chapter Three, 'The Monster Contexts', I give background on my studio work. I discuss the history and contexts for my work, including my

Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line

practice lineage in relation to experimental theater and performance practices, with a history of my education and experience with intercultural work. This leads to a discussion of the studio practice for this study, focusing on performance styles, presentation modes, and a discussion of the enchanted relationship between text and performance in my practice.

Chapter Four, 'The Monsters', offers detailed information on each of the five studio works. It is, like the first chapter, based on a conceit. This conceit is the theater program, where the director and dramaturg offer background information on the performances. In this case, the directors are the Rehearsal Director, Dramaturg, Director and/or Writer, Ritual Director, Sacred Technician, and Artistic Director.

The results chapter, 'The Archive in Trance-Lation', begins with a fuller discussion of the research methodology. This is followed by my findings, arranged according to categories (ancestors, seeing things, hearing things, mirror, trance, and character). From this, I develop a description of the performers' common experience in working under the Kanga method. This leads to a return to research questions, which results in a model for performer training using the Kanga method.

In Chapter Six, 'Through the Looking Glass', I guide the reader through *The Ghost Lounge*, the video documentation that serves as the final art object (included on a thumb drive with this document). I organize this guide using the Kanga method, to demonstrate how I used Kanga to create documentation that also serves as an artifact and art object. Then I offer my final analysis of the

Introduction: Performance on the Kalunga Line

practice and theory in this project. Finally, there is discussion of hauntology, a concept that serves as the culmination of the discussion of the phenomenology of character, as applied to ritual practices in performance contexts, drawing on the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan to point toward a performance state that occupies two ontologies at once. This is followed by a conclusion discussing flaws, original contribution to knowledge, and areas of future research.

The appendices include transcripts of performer and practitioner interviews, interview questions, the *Sorcerer's Notebook* (my field notes and auto-ethnographic writings that were formalized as the Kanga method), performance texts, the transcript of the spoken word text in *The Ghost Lounge*, and the bibliography. There are further details and explanations within the text when the reader is referred to these appendices.

Now that the reader has some background on the studio work, the nature of the research, and something about the research questions, I start with Afro-Cuban ritual practice, and the tension between ritual and performance. My favorite metaphor for intercultural work is the train station, where multiple tracks cross and converge. This thesis begins there, in a place in between ontologies, where ritual and performance intersect, run parallel, always affecting each other and sometimes crashing into each other, as a conversation between the medium and the message.

Chapter One:

A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

My work is largely centered in intercultural concerns and involves some migration between one worldview and another (often through religious systems that shape these worldviews). I occupy different subject positions at different times. I come from an ethnic background that migrated to the United States from Europe, and my research and spiritual interests are in African-derived Caribbean religions as practiced in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. I am initiated into two of these (Lukumí and Palo Monte). I am, ritually speaking, an insider, and culturally speaking, an outsider (what C. Lynn Carr, sociology professor and Lukumí scholar, terms a cultural newcomer; Carr, 2015: 27). This sometimes creates confusion on the part of outsiders to these traditions. This is particularly acute in ritual situations, when I sometimes have more ritual knowledge and less cultural knowledge than others. Like most people I know, I am often playing multiple roles at once, and often in ritual situations.

In my research and practice for this project, I have played many roles. In the playing, I found that the discordances as well as the correspondences in the roles have produced questions and tensions that have served to further the work. I explain these questions and tensions throughout this thesis in the form

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

of a dramatic text. In this text, I inhabit the roles that I find myself playing most frequently, enabling me to establish my subject positions, as they emerge in different contexts, and allow the sometimes-contradictory positions to exist simultaneously. I am giving names to these subject positions, taking on their points of view as if they were individual characters, and allowing them speak to each other. This chapter is a conversation between these subject positions, as I now explain.

In the name of establishing a central authority through which the reader can enter this world, it is the Ritual Director who speaks for me in the voice I am using now. This Ritual Director serves three purposes: it is a narrative strategy (assuming one central voice that does not claim to be objective), a philosophical position (maintaining that there are contradictions and correspondences within any subjectivity, but also claiming a space from which to speak), and a reinforcement of a theme (persona, character, spirits of the dead are subject positions that can be consciously inhabited). In any place in the text where I do not designate the speaker by character name, the reader should assume that it is my persona as Ritual Director who is speaking.

Besides the Ritual Director, there are three other prominent voices: the Artistic Director, the Dramaturg, and the Director of the Psyche. Each of these represents a particular way of knowing. The Artistic Director experiences the world through a subjective, and at times even narcissistic, lens. This voice knows through autobiographical reflection, understands through metaphor, and has tendencies to come to conclusions prematurely. There is something

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

naïve about the persona, to be sure, but in the naïveté there is an ability to make important leaps. The Dramaturg represents knowing through archival documentation. This persona appears to assume elitist and Eurocentric cultural positions, but is actually desperately seeking to develop a system of applying academic rigor to contexts that consistently escape the traditional methods of capture. The Director of the Psyche sees the field of human interaction as various distortions of consciousness, and sees Western psychoanalytic tradition as another distortion. The Director of the Psyche was born from an experimental tradition of performance engaged in questions of representation, presence, and projection, and sees things through a Lacanian lens.

This chapter introduces the reader to the nuances of the argument, through distinct voices before they become subsequently more tangled. Each persona represents different frameworks and concerns; occasionally they overlap nicely, and often they clash uncomfortably.

One of the productive tensions throughout this thesis is between ritual and performance, and this has proven to be a creative and generative space. The field of performance studies has, from the beginning, interrogated this tension (Schechner, 1988: 152), as the tension itself is often balanced on assumptions that pose performance as a Western mode, and ritual as non-Western. These assumptions stem, arguably, from colonial binarisation (Abimbola and Hallen, 1993: 213), but there are productive questions embedded in the tension: how do cultural assumptions limit the experience for spectator and participant? Do such binary frameworks limit the ability to

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

observe how the modes might be speaking to each other? Who determines what is Western, non-Western, ritual, and performance? I am exploring the tension in the first two chapters in terms of weight and emphasis, so Chapter One has an emphasis on ritual, and Chapter Two emphasizes performance, with the understanding that the distinction between the two may be more acute in theory than in practice. By allowing for the possibility of multiple subject positions at once, the question of distinction and the possibility of resolution fade into the background, and there emerges a space that is potentially haunted.

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

(**PROLOGUE:** There are sounds of dogs circling outside, howling a little, whining a little, and they continue to gather throughout the conversation:)

RITUAL DIRECTOR

Let's start by introducing ourselves, very briefly, I hope. I am the Ritual Director. In the art practice, in the documentation, and in the thesis writing, I am speaking as an initiate in Lukumí and Palo Monte.

DRAMATURG

I am the Dramaturg, and I am in charge of citations and clarity of argument. In lieu of footnotes, you have me.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

How very Harvard.

DRAMATURG

My task, as I see it, is to keep everyone in line. To make sure you don't start relying on hearsay, I am always checking for substantiation. I am the unpopular kid here.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

I live in metaphor. Artistic Director. This is me. I am a dog, waking up, wondering why I am surrounded by cats, and how we will never understand each other's language.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

I am the Director of the Psyche. Ever since I was a little kid, I've been curious about what happens to people when they pretend to be someone else. Like the Ritual Director, I have been inside ritual spaces. Unlike the Ritual Director, I do not still live in ritual spaces. I think it is impossible to live in them, and I also think the need for ritual cannot be satisfied by ritual, and this lack is what makes Western performance so interesting to me.

DRAMATURG

I'm going to need sources here.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

Can you all give the Dramaturg all your books on Lacan now? It gives him something to do while I talk about Afro-Cuban religion.

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

DRAMATURG

I love books.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

(to RITUAL DIRECTOR.)

You're tricky.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

I want to mention something before we begin, concerning citation specifically. What we're talking about here, in relation to these traditions but particularly to trance, is a reflection of research through printed material, and also reflects what I've learned in conversations with elders and practitioners. Some of these conversations were conducted during formal interviews for this research, but many of these conversations came from relationships formed during ritual practices over years of experience. These are initiatory traditions, and also primarily oral traditions. Some of the things I know, and perhaps even most of them, ritually speaking, resist academic citation, and I imagine this is for obvious reasons. Elders pass along information from their elders. This is part of a worldview where we live in a continuum of the living, the dead, the not-yet-born. We know things because the dead have passed them along. We share the knowledge in ceremonial practice to enrich the lives of the living, in order to preserve this knowledge for the next generations. Knowledge is passed along in ritual contexts, and these things are recorded or documented in their own ways, according to particular epistemological traditions.

For five years I studied and read books and articles on these traditions, practicing in a Lukumí house where the community was far apart, and so much of my initial learning was through books and electronic conversations. I left the house eventually and continued to practice on my own for a few years. I discovered that one does not get very far without a community in this tradition. A few years later I met Robert Johnson, who became my godfather. He was academically trained in world religion, but he taught me that in these traditions, the learning happens through ritual experience. It was when I started to work with my hands, in communities of other practitioners, that I experienced magic, and this magic turned out to be knowledge. This suggests that a great deal of what I have to share comes from these experiences, and there should be a way of citing this. This is a lack in academic tradition. This ritual knowledge comes from a long line of ancestors, and in a sense, every practitioner has a bibliography of ancestors they carry with them in their initiatory line. This is a list of names, called the *moyuba*, and although I wouldn't be comfortable with that list in print, I need to mention that I am speaking because of them, whenever I am speaking about ritual things. When I am citing the living, from formal interviews, as well as references in print, these follow the usual academic standards and conventions.

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

In other words, there are ghosts here.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

Um, duh.

(SCENE 1: LUKUMÍ.)

RITUAL DIRECTOR

'Performance is ritual, and ritual is performance' (Abimbola, 1998). I begin with this quote, because it helps to center my thoughts in a particular context. This was in 1998, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, when I was receiving *Ori* from Dr. Wande Abimbola, the *Awise* for the Yoruba. The title *Awise* means that he is a high *Babalawo* who serves as an intermediary between Yoruba religion in Nigeria and Yoruba-descended practices outside Nigeria. In Yoruba religious structure he is the final authority on *Ifa* in Africa and the New World.

DRAMATURG

There is some unpacking to be done with all of this.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

There are many knots to untie, yes. I will explain them all, but first, the context of the quote. Dr. Abimbola was reciting from the *odu Ifa*, a body of knowledge that is passed down orally among high priests. It is composed of 256 primary verses (and countless secondary verses, as it is always expanding), and this makes up the traditional cosmological knowledge of the Yoruba people, and those who follow their principles in the diaspora.

When he said, 'Performance is ritual, and ritual is performance', he had just finished a long recitation of the *odu* that came up for me on that occasion. The recitation took some time, as he recalled and recited many secondary verses. The experience was one where I felt otherworldly, and at the same time seduced by the power of his oratory. This ritual was a performance, opening up the present to traditional knowledge.

When I am talking about these ritual, cosmological, and religious systems, I am using the word *traditional* to refer to the ritual practices, and not the systems themselves. 'Traditional', when used to describe these systems, has negative connotations because it necessarily implies an opposition to modern, even though it replaces the more negative 'primitive' (Hallen and Sodipo, 1986: 6). Instead, I am specifying the system as either Yoruba, or Yoruba-descended or -derived. To complicated matters, there is a system in the United States that calls itself ATR, for African Traditional Religion, a term they use to describe themselves. For the record, I am not ATR, but Lukumí.

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

I am a priest of Obatala in the Lukumí tradition. Lukumí, or Santería, comes from the West African Yoruba religion, ‘a religious tradition with millions of adherents in Africa and the Americas’ (Brandon, 1997: 1). It is also known as *la Regla de la Ocha*, or *Ocha*, among other terms. *Santería* is the most popular. *Lukumí* is a term that many practitioners use to describe themselves, although more recently there is a return to the orthography of the late 19th century, spelling it *Lukumí*. Using this word instead of *Santería* means that the practitioner is separating himself from the association *Santería* has with Catholic saints, signifying a practice that is more African, but still retaining Cuban variants and innovations. So the term itself is a philosophical alignment with African origins as well as with the ancestors in Cuba. The word itself has ancestors embedded in it (Palmié, 2013: 271, n. 7).

Santería is referred to as a syncretic religion, where the pantheon of African spirits was syncretized with the pantheon of Catholic saints, because of perceived shared attributes (Brandon, 1997: 76). But *Santería* is not simply a mix of African and Catholic beliefs. Early on in its development, it mixed with local indigenous beliefs, borrowed and shared with other African nations in Cuba, and later incorporated elements of spiritism, as brought to the New World by the French esotericist Allan Kardec (Brandon, 1997: 1–2).

The conflation of *Orishas* (Yoruba deities) with Catholic saints was not simply an exchange of metaphors. The metaphorical similarities signify an ongoing cultural conversation. David Brown uses the term ‘callaloo culture (a Caribbean culinary metaphor for mixture)’ (Brown, 2003: 5) to refer to this system as one that is in process rather than one that is already complete. Stephan Palmié uses similar culinary metaphors in describing it as a recipe that is continually changing. He points out that one of the most vital elements of Lukumí is its ability to adapt, by incorporating aspects of the traditions that might try to envelop it. In fact, he argues that *Santería*, as an objective field of study, is as easy to pin down as subatomic particles:

If what we are studying were to be ‘a religion’, then what about all the statues of Catholic saints, Buddhas, Indians, Dr. Gregorio Hernándezes, porcelain tigers, K-Mart plastic dolls, or Masonic implements on the shrines of our interlocutors? What of Allan Kardec’s *Oraciones escogidas*, flowers, and water on a shelf in their living room, the *nganga* power-objects they keep hidden in a shed in the backyard, the Spanish translations of the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, Nostradamus’s prophecies, Reiki-manuals, or indeed ethnographies of Afro-Cuban religion that we might find on their bookshelves? Is all of this ‘*Santería*’? And if yes, where does it begin or end? (Palmié, 2013: 3–4)

Anyone who studies *Santería* ultimately influences the recipe in some way.

The Orisha, or Orishas (both can be considered plural) are spirits of nature, representing aspects of natural phenomena. *Orisha* is sometimes translated as

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

‘God’, but it’s not like the Judeo-Christian notion of God. They don’t operate the same way. Orishas are energies of nature, and there are multiple bridges to communicate with them. One can worship with images and candles, but one can also worship by bathing in a river, dancing, becoming possessed, or visiting a godparent. These things are not only outside us, or transcendent, but inside and immanent. One could see the pantheon of Orishas as an anthropomorphization of the natural world, a way of explaining the origin of things using deities in place of natural principles or laws.

People are initiated as priestesses and priests into cults of specific Orishas. As such, they are specialists in the kinds of energies that Orisha represents. With training and time, they can become adept at manipulating this energy to produce positive or negative changes in the world.

I am initiated to Obatala (associated with the mountain, whose attributes are creation, creativity, and patience), and my mother is Yewa (associated with the bottom of the grave, and related to death, destruction, and the decomposition of the body). My initiation was ten years after I met Abimbola in 1998, when I received Ori (the metaphysical head, discussed below). I had received the *elekes* (the five necklaces, or *collares*, whose ceremonial reception is the first formal entry into the tradition) a few years before. This is important here because that ceremony marks me as Lukumí. The way I received Ori is ATR. This reflects my godparents’ perspective during those years, which was shifting between different practices. As I suggested, I am not in their house anymore, and since 2005 I have been working with the same Lukumí godfather.

There are three parts to a person, the *ara* (the body), the *emi* (the soul, or the divine breath that is present throughout the life of the body), and the *ori*. The *ori* is individual and unique, applying to only one lifetime. The *emi* ‘returns to the world an indefinite number of times’ (Hallen and Sodipo, 1986: 105). Ori itself is an object, a god, and an idea. ‘It is the ancestral guardian soul, having its physical symbolization as the physical head’ (Balogun, 2007: 119).

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

Is it the personality?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

Robert Farris Thompson refers to it as the ‘essence of personality’ (1993: 9/1). It’s not the same idea of personality as in Western psychoanalytic theory. The personality in Yoruba cosmology is related to character and destiny, where who you are is tied to what you are born to do (Abimbola, 1976: 113). Further, the Ori is divine, and is an Orisha itself.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

Everyone is an Orisha, then?

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

RITUAL DIRECTOR

No, there is an aspect to your consciousness that is Ori, that is connected to an original agreement that you made before you came down to earth. When you are born, you forget. You are reminded of the original agreement through rituals, and these rituals align you with that original agreement. By taking part in a ritual, you remember. Ori represents consciousness, in a sense, but then all the Orishas that one carries in the head become part of that consciousness. It is difficult to be precisely clear about this, because this touches on certain secrets, and I am not going to reveal those here. But I want to be clear that I am not intentionally obfuscating. What you might call psychological manifestations or projections are different things in the Yoruba and Yoruba-descended worldviews. There are physical objects in the physical world that have energetic counterparts, one could say, in the spiritual world. I received Ori from Dr. Abimbola. This Ori is a physical object, one that was created and ritually birthed in Nigeria. He carried it across the ocean and presented it to me. It is a representation of my head, and it also is my head.

There is no central authority in Lukumí. Every house practices independently. There are no formal churches. Ceremonies happen in various spaces, often hidden, just as they had to be hidden in Cuba at various stages of its history. I have attended ceremonies in garages in Phoenix and Las Vegas, living rooms and outdoor patios in Los Angeles, in basements in New York City, and flats in Berlin. There is no formal doctrine each house must adhere to, but they are each tied to a common history. In one sense, all Lukumí practitioners are connected to a history that traces back to Africa. More essentially, however, they are connected by lineages. This tradition is, I suppose, like yoga, one based on lineage that is initiatory rather than through bloodline. If my house begins to make innovations in the traditions, then we are ultimately going to have to answer to the ancestors in our line. The concept of *iwa pele*, or good character (Abimbola, 1975: 390), makes us accountable, not only to the members of the Lukumí community in the world at large, but also to the ancestors, as well as to the generations not yet born.

The ancestors I mention, by the way, the ones who connect our lineages back to Africa, are not ghosts who can haunt us from without, but from within, because we carry them in the *aché* that we receive when we are initiated.

DRAMATURG

What is *aché*?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

It is translated as 'the power to do things' or 'the force to make all things happen and multiply' (Thompson, 1984: 18). It is the life force, that thing that turns potentiality into material reality. In initiation ceremonies, santeras and santeros are channeling their *aché* to the new initiate. As the initiate moves

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

through her life, she learns how to manifest her own *aché*. *Aché* does not exist solely in initiatory contexts. It is present in all things. All things, animate and inanimate, have potential power.

DRAMATURG

I just want to make sure I'm clear on this. When someone is a practitioner of Lukumí in the United States, they are connected to lineages that originate in Cuba, and those lineages are connected to Africa?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

That is correct.

DRAMATURG

And you are connected to a particular lineage, one with its own rituals and traditions?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

The rituals and traditions are shared. There are some minor differences in the way houses may do things. These are, generally speaking, ritual variations, the details of which aren't going to illuminate anything to an outsider. I am from a *rama*, or line, known as *La Pimienta*. The name comes from the founder, Oba Tola, who ran a house of ill repute in Havana. She initiated many people, and this included prostitutes, and that was how the rama was nicknamed *pimienta*, or 'hot pepper' (Brown, 2003: 102).

DRAMATURG

Initiation confers Orisha energy to you directly, is that correct?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

Correct. And it allows one access.

DRAMATURG

Access to what?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

To certain secrets and certain rituals. It also means that I'm part of that line of ancestors, that their energy is part of me, and I carry that to the next part of the ancestral line. One thing that is difficult for outsiders to understand is that these lines are initiatory, so that there can be *santeras* and *santeros* from other cultures and ethnic backgrounds. I do not have African ancestors in my family tree, but speaking as an insider to these traditions, I certainly have African ancestors now. That doesn't mean that I can speak of what it means to be Cuban, however, or Puerto Rican, or that I understand what it is to be black or Latino in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the United States, or anywhere. But I can talk about what it is like to be in the Lukumí tradition.

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

Who knows why the Orishas pick who they pick to be priestesses and priests? But it is what it is. I am a santero, initiated in 2008, and I have practiced this tradition for more than half my life. I am also an artist, and an educator who has been working in academia for over a decade. So there is some schizophrenia in my position, and I imagine it is like that for many who are integrating ritual practices in an academic environment. I can take a jar with honey and cinnamon and turn it into a love potion, and I am also stuck with this guy

(Indicates the DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE.)

following me around.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

I don't like being followed myself.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

We don't always agree, you see. But being a ritual insider, I can also speak to the experience of inhabiting several ontological systems simultaneously, and talk of it in terms of embodied knowledge and theoretical practice. It will help when we start to get specific about this work, of inhabiting characters and being inhabited, because I have been there too.

DRAMATURG

You are also initiated in Palo. Is that unusual to be initiated in two Afro-Cuban systems?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

Not at all. In many cases, when it is ritually determined that one is claimed by both, he is initiated into Palo first, and then into Lukumí. There are reasons for this order of events that are consigned to secrecy, but suffice it to say one can be in both traditions and develop in both.

DRAMATURG

Are there significant differences between Lukumí and Palo?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

Oh, dear. That's a very complicated question.

(SCENE 2: PALO MONTE.)

RITUAL DIRECTOR

Before I answer that, I'll talk a bit about the origins, although *origin* is a problematic term for these things.

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

For anything, really. Origin suggests an originary wholeness, and origins are messy and multiple (Foucault, 1972: 13).

RITUAL DIRECTOR

Roots is a better word, and very apt for anyone who practices Palo. Palo Monte in Cuba has its roots during the slave trade (1511–1868). In this case, the origin is in the people of Central Africa, ‘in the vicinity of the Cross River Valley, an area covered by present-day Chad and Sudan’ (Martínez-Ruiz, 2013: 15). As with the Yoruba, there is a colonial designation accorded to the people, based on linguistics, designating them as Bantu and Bakongo (or Ki-Kongo, or sometimes even referred to as simply Kongo). There is a pantheon of deities who are all under one central God, *Nsambi*, or *Nzambi*. This is where the word *zombie* comes from. In Yoruba culture, there is also a central deity, *Olodumare*, who created the world and then went to sleep. In Kongo culture, *Nzambi* is not sleeping, but an active part of the human cosmos. While *Olodumare* is invoked only on specific occasions, *Nzambi* is referred to frequently.

In terms of how ceremonies and rituals are performed, Palo is different than Lukumí in that there is less agreement among practitioners as to the practices. What is formalized and somewhat uniform among Lukumí houses is not as firmly in place in Palo houses. Generally speaking, one can move from house to house and navigate most ceremonial differences, and lack of local knowledge is not typically perceived as a lack of etiquette. I was in a situation once where, fairly newly initiated in Palo, I walked into an apartment while a mounting (possession) was happening. The woman who was mounted (by a spirit named *Siete Rayos*) demanded that I salute her in traditional ceremonial fashion. I had been taught this once, and couldn’t remember the complicated order of gestures. I thought this would have been a problem, but the spirit understood, and with the help of an initiated friend, I was walked through the gestural greeting. She didn’t know me, but her possessing spirit recognized my spirit, and this seemed to override any concerns about protocol. She, or rather he, at the time, was more concerned with a physical malady he saw in me. He lifted me up backwards, so that my back was on his back, and spun me around in order to perform a spiritual cleaning on me. As this older and somewhat compact woman, possessed by a Palo spirit, spun me around, I realized that healing is more important than protocol in these cases.

There are also differences, based in misperception, that Palo is related to dark magic, and Lukumí is related to white magic. This is beyond the scope of this study, but there is a substantial history of demonization of these traditions in general: for example, the Hollywood stereotypes in relation to Vodou (popularly known as *Voodoo*). A recent report in San Antonio, Texas, linked the reasons behind a child murder to the mother’s involvement in Santería (FOX San Antonio, 2014). The stereotypes are not confined to popular culture, but

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

extend into ‘the social, cultural, and historical sciences’ (Brandon, 1997: 182), where European models are presented as superior to African models. The stereotyping is also present within the religious communities, where there is often a cultural chauvinism at play, posing Palo as somehow inferior to Lukumí.

In my studies and experiences, I have come across two lines of thought in terms of stereotypes toward Palo. Along one line, there is a concerted effort to remove the negative stigmas related to Palo by emphasizing the profound link to its African origins. Along the other line, Palo is always seen in relation to Lukumí, where its pantheon is seen as a version of the Yoruba pantheon. Raul Canizares, a revered priest of Palo (and now an ancestor), writes that Orishas are interchangeable with *Nkisis* (2002: 10). It is questionable to make such an equivalence; it is more accurate to say that Orisha and Nkisi are similar. There are some overlaps, but they are different cosmological systems. The systems have their own deities, and those deities have their own guiding principles.

Palo lineages do harmonize on some basic cosmological principles, particularly the relationship between the human and spirit world. To explain this, I return to the word ‘Nkisi’. The word ‘comes from the root verb *kinsa*, which means “to take care, or is what takes care of life”’ (Martínez-Ruiz, 2013: 149). Practitioners also refer to them as *Muertos* (the dead), which can be confusing to outsiders, because when someone is mounted in *Espiritismo* (the practice of mediumship), they also use the term *muerto*. Muerto also translates to *Egun* in Lukumí, which specifically refers to those ancestors that one inherits through the bloodline. When someone is initiated in Lukumí, one becomes part of the bloodline of those who were initiated before them. The worlds do tend to mix. For example, when someone is talking about their muerto, they could be speaking of an ancestor spirit that is always following them, inherited from a Lukumí or Palo line; an elevated spirit that is not related by lineage; or this muerto could be one received in a formal Palo ceremony. The distinctions vary from house to house, because, as my godfather says, every Palo is different.

Further, Nkisi can refer to different things. Nkisi is a general term that can refer to a charm, a container for an ancestor spirit, or to the spirit itself. An Nkisi, when referring to a charm, is a packet wrapped in cloth and tied in ritual ways. It can also be a statue, one representing an anthropomorphized deity, which is packed and wrapped in cloth and tied ritually. These packets contain herbs, bones, stones, mirrors, or a wide array of sacred ingredients that represent the cosmos in miniature. When they are packed together, they have greater power, and over time and use, they accumulate more power. The ingredients in the charm are what make up the essence of the Nkisi – that is to say, the heart. So it is an object that has heart.

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

The Palo pantheon of Goddesses and Gods is also collectively referred to as Muertos, spirits of the dead.

DRAMATURG

The Muertos and the Orishas possess, right?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

Yes. The possessions are different, but it seems that all spirit possession, in either tradition, has an element of ancestor possession. There are elders who say this explicitly, as seen in this quote from Lydia Cabrera, an ethnographer of Afro-Cuban religion in the 20th century (Rodríguez-Mangual, 2004). Here, she is quoting an elder possessed by a Palo spirit called Mamá Caché:

Ocha o palo...¿qué, no viene a ser lo mismo? ¡Espiritu na más! ¿No se cae igual con santo que con muerto? 'En religión todo es cosa de los muertos. Los ikús se volvieron santos'. Santos y espíritus son visitas diarias en las casas del pueblo cubano. — 'El espiritismo...¡Bah! En Africa, lo mismo hablaban los muertos. Eso no es nuevo'. (Cabrera, 1982: 30)

My English translation:

Ocha or palo...what, it doesn't come to the same thing? A spirit and nothing more! Don't you fall [into trance] the same, whether it's a saint or an ancestor spirit? 'In religion everything is a thing of the dead. The ancestors taken by death turn into saints.' Saints and spirits are daily visitors in the houses of the Cuban people. — 'Spiritism...Bah! In Africa, it's the same, the dead spoke. This is nothing new'.

DRAMATURG

What is the difference in ritual practice?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

Practically speaking, it is trickier to work with a Muerto in Palo than with an Orisha in Lukumí. The Palo Muertos can become demanding of time and attention, and a practitioner who is not well trained in how to work with these spirits of the dead can find themselves caught in a trap where they become servants to their pots. The bad magician in Disney's *The Princess and the Frog* (Ineffable-Hufflepuff, 2013), although a horrible stereotype, does resemble a palero whose Muerto has gotten out of control. However, for the purposes of this conversation, leading into a discussion of the art practice in relation to methods and research methodologies, the performers aren't privy to these practices, which are initiatory and hierarchical in structure. Instead, I am drawing on ideas and methods from these practices to induce states of trance.

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

DRAMATURG

This is a good time to move from a discussion of the ritual practices in general, and talk about trance in particular.

(SCENE 3: TRANCE.)

RITUAL DIRECTOR

Trance is an altered state, but not all altered states are trance (those induced by intoxicants, for example). The best measure for testing whether or not someone has experienced a trance state is to ask them. When trance stops happening, the performer recognizes that she has been in a state of nonordinary consciousness. By *ordinary* I mean that she has an idea of what is her usual state of consciousness. I do not decide whether or not they are in a state of trance, but if they tell me they are, then I believe them. I am looking at subjective accounts of trance experience, and I am looking at the performers' experiences in the studio practice.

DRAMATURG

There are other subjective accounts of trance experiences. Outside of these cosmological systems, there is Bateson and Mead's work in Bali, and Jane Belo also worked in Bali in the 1930s collecting first-person accounts. Then there is Larry Peters working in Nepal. Looking at studies specific to the area, the first to mention is Lydia Cabrera, whose life work was collecting interviews from religious practitioners in Cuba in the early part of the twentieth century. Natalia Bolivar Aróstegui, one of Cabrera's students, continues to follow in those footsteps. Then there is Diana DeGroat Brown's *Umbanda* (1986) which contains, like the work of Maya Deren, first-person accounts of possession. Maya Deren's work is still among the most cited, because it is so visceral and poetic. This is from her anthropology thesis, where she describes being possessed by Erzulie Freda, the Vodou Goddess of Love:

Slowly still, borne on its lightless beam, as one might rise up from the bottom of the sea, so I rise up, the body growing lighter with each second, am up-borne stronger, drawn up faster, uprising swifter, mounting still higher, higher still, faster, the sound grown still stronger, its draw tighter, still swifter, become loud, loud and louder, the thundering rattle, clangoring bell, unbearable, then suddenly: surface; suddenly: air; suddenly; sound is light, dazzling white. (Deren, 1983: 261)

She was writing about Vodou and not Lukumí or Palo, although there are some shared roots.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

My own definition of trance derives from Afro-Cuban ritual systems. That means these trance states are related to possession. James T. Houk discusses the phenomenon of possession, in relation to the Orisha tradition in Trinidad. He

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

writes, 'Spirit possession is one specific type of the broader category commonly referred to as "altered states of consciousness". These occur universally, but the forms that specific manifestations take are culture-bound' (1995: 116).

This is not necessarily in opposition to, but definitely as a contrast against Western notions of trance:

Trance may be what people experience when both the frontal lobes of the brain are highly stimulated at the same time. The left lobe, the seat of logical thought and speech, controls the 'ergotropic' (energy) system. Stimulating the ergotropic system increases heart rate, blood pressure, and sweat. The pupils of the eyes dilate. Brainwaves are desynchronized; muscles become tense or even rigid. Hormones such as epinephrine, norepinephrine, cortisone, and thyroxine are pumped into the blood. One feels energized, aroused, and alert. The right lobe, the seat of spatial and tonal perceptions, controls the 'trophotropic' (relaxation) system. Stimulating the trophotropic system decreases heart rate, lowers blood pressure, and lessens sweating. The pupils constrict, brainwaves are synchronized, muscle tone relaxes, and secretions of insulin, estrogen, and androgen increase. (Schechner, 2002: 193–194)

This description is based on measurable physiological phenomena. It is similar to descriptions that are common to other studies in consciousness in the 1970s (Fisher: 1971). It still appears that this is the authorizing discourse for contemporary studies of altered states. However, one of my hopes is to contribute to the body of knowledge of trance that is based in subjective direct experience. There are plenty of examples of cultures with long histories of these kinds of knowledge. The trick is to avoid applying Western measurements to these systems.

DRAMATURG

By looking at how breathing and thought exercises slow the mind down to alpha state (Peters, 1983: 11), for example, we can see that Western methods of studying trance can legitimize these practices.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

These practices don't need legitimization. The use of physiological data to verify a trance state seems to miss the point entirely, suggesting that studying African-derived trance needs objective verification from other epistemologies.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

That's true, but I think what's important is that we have these conversations. There is something elemental and essential about sharing information in order to find correspondences, acknowledging that we have particular cultural frames for these correspondences. There is something curious about the ontological experience of music, for example, where, as performer Heather Harper notes that 'you go to any rave and the DJ can put people under a trance by the rhythms of the music' (Harper, 2 December, 2015).

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

And compare this to a quote by practitioner Gavin Russom, an experimental electronic musician and a Lukumí initiate to the Orisha Oshun, who has a definition of ritual trance that is similar to Heather's (for the reader's ease, I am using first names when I refer to the participants—performers and practitioners—outside of parentheses, and last names within citational parentheses):

Ninety-nine percent of the time it's like you go to a club and just enact a ritual that everybody knows...I want to weave that intention of, like, just blowing all of those things out of the water into the music that I do...in the hopes that people can have an experience where they feel like some larger force moves through them in a way that's hopefully like healing or productive. (Russom, 20 January 2015)

Then there is my godfather Robert likewise discussing music, this time in group settings as containing the potential to induce altered states. Trance is part of Lukumí and Palo culture, but it is also part of the ecumenical cultural milieu because of its ubiquity in club settings. If one considers the African roots of popular music in the U.S., trance through music is transcultural.

DRAMATURG

Are you saying then what I think you're saying?

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Yes, the rhythm is gonna get you. Exactly. Even studying Western forms of altered states using Western methods is insufficient:

These states, like dreams, are fundamentally non-linear, non-discursive, non-linguistic...The 'oh wow' descriptions of these states are not simply self-indulgence or cultural protection, then. How are we to describe them if this is the case? New techniques, perhaps drawing or performing them, as is often done with dreams, may be required to study them. (Meyerhoff, 1990: 249)

I am looking at ancestor possession, and ultimately performers performing their roles, from inside this experience.

DRAMATURG

From inside a ritual experience.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Correct.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

Returning to the quote that opened this discussion, whether or not performance is distinguishable from ritual depends entirely on our definitions of it. Mine is surely different from yours. I even suspect that mine will be different from mine

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

in another moment, depending on the context. In this context, however, can you explain what exactly you mean when you talk about ritual?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

I think of both ritual and performance as potential vehicles to take you outside of yourself. Ecstasy, I suppose. It's interesting to note what happens on your way out of yourself, but just as interesting as what happens when you come back. If a ritual is done correctly, I come back seeing more detail, smelling more keenly, and generally speaking, more aware of the bones in my body. Performance does the same thing. I approach these things intuitively.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Me, too, absolutely.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

It is a good thing I am here, then.

DRAMATURG

Me, too, absolutely.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

Because that, sir, is shoddy thinking. One of the central concerns that runs through the studio work, as I see it, is that there is a slippage between performance and ritual. It is so central that it is almost epistemic, in Foucault's sense in *The Order of Things*, where it 'defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge' (Foucault, 1973: 168). So I want to articulate the distinction between performance and ritual, as I see them. In Richard Schechner's conception, there are four spheres of performance: 'entertainment, healing, education, and ritualizing' (Schechner, 1995: 20). So performance also includes those events that happen in ritual contexts outside of the formal performance/theatrical presentation, performance of gender and cultural identity, and various kinds of performance of self, among other possibilities. There is an elision between performance and ritual at work here, where the distinctions are slight. Theater and ritual, when they elide, are 'the same dream dreaming within itself the encircled wound of *representation*' (Blau, 1991: xv). However, in terms of cultural contexts, the distinction is not slight.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

It is not slight, that is true. The weight of context was made clear to me one night on a motorcycle in the desert. I was on my way to work an initiation ceremony in Las Vegas. I passed through the Strip, a simulacrum saturated in performativity.

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

I'm going to interrupt you here and ask that you clarify what you mean by *performative* and *performativity*, as distinguished from *performance*.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

For *performance*, I borrow from Schechner's 'twice-behaved behavior' or 'ritualized behavior conditioned and/or permeated by play' (2002: 52). I borrow the concept of performativity from Butler, where it is a doing, a constituting of identity, socially constructed and producing social effects (1990: 25). So in this case, the Las Vegas strip is performative in that it is, in a sense, performing itself. I drove through the Strip, and twenty minutes later, I was inside a garage, in the midst of the ritual. Because of the proximity in time and space, I found myself reflecting on public performance and private ritual. In public performance, the contexts depend on the performers and the spectators, in a state of constant negotiation. They're not fixed. In private rituals, the contexts are fixed.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

Aha, then you are doing private rituals with the performers, yes?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

What are you asking?

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

What are you doing, exactly, with the performers?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

That is going to be explained more thoroughly in the chapters to follow, but, in brief: I am taking the performers through certain rituals in order to facilitate a change in consciousness when they are performing, but we are not performing these rituals publicly. They are not for public consumption. They are for the performer's own practice. The public performances we are creating together are plays, not rituals, although they have ritual elements that are entirely within the world of the play. For me, the distinction is not between performance and ritual, but between public and private.

Doubling back to Schechner:

Performances consist of twice-behaved, coded, transmittable behaviors. This twice-behaved behavior is generated by interactions between ritual and play. In fact, one definition of performance is: Ritualized behavior conditioned and/or permeated by play. (Schechner, 2002: 52)

The repetition here is important; however, this is, for me, based in a positivist impulse to create taxonomies, and misses something absolutely vital in terms of knowledge. I have noticed a tendency to look at the structures of rituals as if

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

they were generated by human consciousness, but anyone who is inside a ritual understands there is something else happening. Knowledge is co-constituted by human and deity in ritual. That is the primary epistemological difference. In making that leap into the fire, say, we have a situation where

ritual provides the deities and the faith in the deities (the religious ideology, so to speak); whereas the setting seems to blend the real with the unreal to such an extent that indeed communication between the two worlds seems most appropriate. (Maya Deren in Clark, et al., 1985: 490)

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Why can't we perform the rituals? Let's celebrate difference and diversity. We are the world. In my art practice, everything from culture is available for artistic production.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

I understand that, and one of my roles is to stop you.

New methods of study are required, methods that are amenable to a nonlinear, nondiscursive, and nonlinguistic experience. This also applies to new methods of practice. James Wafer, studying Candomblé in Brazil, articulates the difficult position of anyone writing along the threshold between objective and nonobjective discourse. The writer is expected to maintain a distinction between the two discourses, and 'this convention forces on the scholar whose interests exceed the boundaries of objectivism a certain schizophrenia, since s/he is obliged to act as though s/he were two different people' (Wafer, 1991: 94).

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

But we are different people, or rather, four. We are at least four.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

No, we are one person, one person writing this, ultimately, and we are each subject positions within a single identity. But you touch on something elemental here. We are each separate subject positions, but even within our own subjectivity, we may have views that are contradictory, or naive, or simply multiple. One subject position can have multiple ways of looking at something. There is a kind of dual consciousness at work when I am aware of what I am looking at but at the same time I am aware that I am looking at it through a specific lens. This dual consciousness is necessary for the performer in doing this work. It is certainly part of the medium's experience, at least the mediums I have spoken to. My godfather's description of possession affirms that one can indeed be aware of being in a threshold between states, without losing consciousness of himself, but also without interrupting his job as a medium to bring a spirit from one plane to another:

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

People say, ‘Well, I don’t remember anything’; well, I do, I remember. I don’t understand the not remembering part. But I mean, I do. I, you know, all, all I remember is, it just happening, I felt compelled to do these movements and to do these things, and then something kind of took over me from doing these movements and doing these things that I felt compelled to do. And then, and then I was, like an old-fashioned TV set, and you’re in, say you’re inside the box, the TV box. Remember when TVs were in, like, boxes? Like furniture? They were furniture. You know? And I’m inside of there and here’s the TV screen and I’m looking out, into the living room or the kitchen or whatever. I literally remember that, that’s all I remember. That’s the only way I know how to describe it. And not really having control over, and not caring about having control over what I’m doing, but it’s not me, it’s just, just doing, whatever. You know, I’m just kind of observing, I’m observing as, you know, this is taking place. That’s what it felt like. (Johnson, 4 February 2015)

This kind of phenomenological experience is what Michael Atwood Mason refers to as reflective flow (Mason, 2004: 102). Although he coins the term to refer more specifically to the experience of consciousness in other Lukumí ritual contexts, it is useful to me here for several reasons: it sets the groundwork to substantiate the experience of dual consciousness, it covers a broader swath of ritual experience, and it is peculiar to these traditions.

A definition of trance is entirely dependent on the contexts. To return to Wafer, he maintains that he is looking at trance ‘from the perspective of “ordinary knowledge”’ (1991: 94). In other words, it is an everyday occurrence in these contexts. This is a useful leap for me, and I take this leap in the studio work, because it reminds me that it is important to avoid getting caught up in the question of whether or not this is real. Most of us do not spend much time examining whether ordinary and everyday experience is real. It is much more fruitful to talk about it in terms of what it is, rather than whether or not it is.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

Is it at all troubling to you that you’re taking a cultural phenomenon and applying it to another culture, with entirely different contexts?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

As the Ritual Director, I want to know if performers can access an ancestral realm, one where they might communicate with spirits, and whether or not those spirits can work with and through the performers. So what you are asking is a big question: is there a cultural arrogance at the core of this? I am a cultural outsider, who comes from racial privilege in my current political environment, and so the answer is yes, there is arrogance. I am also initiated in this system, and it is an initiatory system, so, by the rules and structures of that system, I also have the right to speak and write about it. Because I see links between the performer’s work and that of the medium, my intention is to create the conditions under which these connections can be practiced responsibly and

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

respectfully. I also intend to speak and write about these connections responsibly and respectfully.

One of the ethical concerns is to ensure that the performer's experience of trance is not overwhelming, where they are in an altered state that they can navigate. This means approaching something closer to ancestor possession than spirit possession. I am using descriptions from ethnographic and anthropological literature, as well as what my elders and fellow ritual practitioners understand about the phenomenon of trance. Houk distinguishes between two categorizations of trance, which are general but accurate to my own experiences and observations: lighter forms of trance, such as speaking slightly differently, small shifts in mannerisms, can suggest possession by ancestors. Heavier trances, where one might suddenly start dancing in circles, moving heavy objects without effort, drinking massive amounts of rum without showing signs of drunkenness, suggest a deity (Houk, 1995: 117).

DRAMATURG

Is it spirit possession, then, rather than trance?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

It's trance. My godfather is explicit about this:

So the definition of trance versus possession...you're in control of trance, you can move in and out of trance, you can accept or not accept going into trance... Whereas possession, even though you may have a choice, and may create that choice to let another aspect, another personality, another energy that is not normally you come in, once it happens, then the choice is taken away from you...you have to just go with it to its completion, whatever that completion is, of a possession, trance you can come out of. (Johnson, 8 February, 2015)

Although there are similarities with possession, I use the term *trance* to indicate that there is still volition for the performer. Spirit possession is a formal trance experience in both Afro-Cuban traditions. This is also called being mounted (Daniel, 2005: 9), being ridden (like a horse), *recibir una inspiración* (get an inspiration), *caer en trance* (fall into trance) (Cabrera, 1986: 2), being touched, hit, etcetera. This happens when an Orisha or a Muerto takes over the consciousness of the devotee. The spirits can come down or rise up to the head of the initiate, signifying the cosmic realms above (*Orun*, like heaven) or from the bottom of the ocean below (Daniel, 2005: 22). There is, also, spirit possession of the living by the dead. These muerto possessions are not as intense as full spirit possession, and do not require the same kinds of formal training. There are ceremonies called *misas* (masses), which are similar to séances, where these kinds of possessions are invited and invoked. However, this kind of possession is more casual and can happen anywhere. In ritual terms, then, these are both called possession, with varying degrees of intensity, and I use the term *trance* to suggest the one of lesser intensity.

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

Performance and ritual are distinguished by context. In a ritual, the behavior is spontaneous, and performance is something where there is training.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

This is slippery, because, although it's not widely discussed, the spontaneous behavior is not entirely spontaneous. Lukumí culture seems to valorize the spontaneous display of ritual knowledge in possession. This is how it presents in social contexts, but behind closed doors there is probably some guidance and teaching. My godfather explains it like this:

Traditionally kind of sometime the way it is with Orisha, too, you just kind of, you might just not do anything, or you might just like say nothing or you might say stupid shit or you might, I don't know what, but there's somebody there to guide you through it. See, I think we have less of that in our community, partly because of a stigma. (Johnson, 4 February 2015)

Robert goes on to explain that the formal possession training that is lacking in Lukumí is said to be present in its Brazilian sister religion, Candomblé:

I think in Candomblé I think they do tell them how, there are elders that tell them, 'Okay, this is the way you move, this is the way you dance, you know, this is the way the Orisha dance'...the Orisha is supposed to be taught. They're supposed to be taught. There's some houses that believe that you just don't come down knowing. You have to be taught. (Johnson, 4 February 2015)

Isis, also an elder of mine, can speak to both Brazilian Candomblé and Cuban Lukumí, as she is familiar with Candomblé practices in her native Brazil and also initiated into Lukumí in the U.S. She confirms what Robert poses:

As part of initiation, one is taught, uh, or when they first bring down the Orisha, like how to tame it...for each person who is bringing down an Orisha there is a *jubonna*, back in Brazil, like a person taking care of, uh that, that person and, uh taking care of the process of trance. We don't have that. (Costa McElroy, 24 December 2014)

Here she is referring to the function of the *jubonna*, as Lukumí practice has an *ayubona*, who guide the initiate through the ceremony, but whose duties do not include formal trance training.

Music scholar Katherine Hagedorn discusses trance training in terms of body memory as a means of both spontaneous knowledge and learning:

Learning how to become possessed is a process that usually takes years of practice...(for example, seeing *oricha* possessions as a child, and thus considering them one of the many possibilities of everyday life) makes the possession process easier to imagine, and thus easier to embody. (Hagedorn, 2001: 109)

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

Even with training, it is often difficult to tell the difference between Orisha and Egun, however. Theoretically, ancestor and Orisha are entirely different, and every practitioner understands this. Ancestors are the ghostly or celestial versions of human beings who have died. Lukumí practitioners contend that in Africa, these were usually ancestors related by blood, but with the slave trade and the African diaspora in the new world, this is not the case any longer. Lineages were separated and severed, and new ties were made, and are still being made, according to new definitions of the spiritual family. Orishas are elemental spirits who have been around since the beginning of the universe. Theoretically, the possessions are different; ritually, there are ceremonies and particular ritual contexts for each kind of possession, and to the observers, they look and feel different. In practice, however, Orisha possession often contains an ancestral component. I have heard practitioners say that no one could actually mount the Orisha, in its full articulation, because that level of energy would explode the medium.

In Umbanda, a spiritist religious practice, the devotees are possessed by Ancestors, elevated souls, and *Orixas* from Candomblé, Lukumí's sister religion.

DRAMATURG

For clarity, let me interject that Candomblé is a diasporic, Yoruba-descended religion that developed in Brazil with a similar history to Lukumí. There are many similarities between the cosmological views, and many ritual variations.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

In Umbanda trance, the ancestral component of Orisha possession is part of the explicit discourse:

In Brazil, we have this tradition that emerged in the '30s, Umbanda, right? And in Umbanda, like the spirits are organized according to the Orishas but you don't bring an Orisha down. You bring spirits down....And then there are the *Egunguns* that you know about, the Egunguns, like *Geledés* and Egunguns, like ancestral, uh, like with a connection to the Orisha but ancestral. (Costa McElroy, 24 December, 2014)

Moreover, Carla Melo suggests that in Umbanda there is a kind of tradition of channeling ancestors outside the bloodline is even more explicit:

There is kind of, this uh, you know this, almost invented ancestry that is so much about, you know, kind of, embracing those that have been completely, you know, oppressed through history, so it's a, it's a weird way, we're like white people and we have, you know, these Ancestors, that, you, if you look from U.S. identity politics it's very problematic, but whatever, it is what it is. (Melo, 13 April 2015)

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

The practices of channeling the dead from outside the bloodline are also common in misas and Palo Monte. It would be valuable to examine how the racial politics play out from region to region, and in the different traditions, but such a study is outside the scope of this work. I am taking the time to mention the practices here to suggest something about the spirit world. Whereas I am in the realm of the living and want to ask questions about the subtle or gross distinctions between Ancestor and Orisha, and ask questions about the racial politics of spirit possession, the spirit world does not seem to care about these questions. That which wants to manifest will find a way to manifest, despite context, training, or political correctness.

It does matter to humans, however. The experience for the possessed is more strenuous for elemental spirits than spirits of the dead. The distinction is also experienced differently for worshippers. For Isis, the difference comes down to something where *you can just tell*:

In trance you can, you can tell the difference between an Orisha and a spirit, it depends, it's like women who fake orgasms, no? If they never had one, how would they know?...Oh, okay, like an Orisha is com-coming down a much stronger energy and, or a spirit is coming down, a lighter energy or not so overwhelming like. (Costa McElroy, 24 December 2014)

DRAMATURG

Is this part of the methodology, then? 'You can just tell'? Is this one of those ineffable or ephemeral things?

RITUAL DIRECTOR

No, this is not theorizing an abstract, but discussing a lived experience. The authorizing agent is lived experience, lived through the bodies of practitioners. This is essential for understanding ritual experience. This is still an oral tradition, and even that experience which is beyond words is passed down from the generations that came before.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

It also serves well for the experience of the performer, and this is what we need to discuss next.

DRAMATURG

I don't think we're done with this discussion of Afro-Cuban practices.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

Of course not. There is more to say. But in terms of laying out the groundwork, and emphasizing the central lens through which this is being presented, this is sufficient to move into a discussion of performance and performer training.

Chapter One: A Way in to the Other Side of the Mirror

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

That necessarily includes some discussion of character, and this means you'll be hearing more from me, because that is directly related to contextual understandings of identity derived from psychoanalytic theory.

DRAMATURG

Performer preparation and character, then, is the focus of the first part of the next chapter, after which we will discuss how ritual practices feed into the performance practices, including a discussion of the ethical considerations in working with this particular kind of intercultural work.

(A note to the reader. There is now a shift in tone toward a more singular authorial voice. However, in order to maintain the clarity of perspective when there are shifts, we continue to interject throughout the text in the guise of these characters. The Dramaturg, the Director of the Psyche, the Artistic Director, and the Ritual Director will recur. They do not always agree, and these tensions are meaningful for the argument. The conversation will continue,.)

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

Wonderful, because I hate long good-byes.

(Dogs are barking. End of scene.)

Conclusion

Through the persona of the Ritual Director, I am centering my position from within particular frameworks. First, this is a point of view that speaks from inside a Lukumí and Palo Monte cosmological perspective. It is also from the perspective of a European-descended initiate in an African-derived religion. I am also speaking from a particular perspective toward ritual and performance, emphasizing ritual. From these perspectival points, I have introduced some of the background and contexts for these Afro-Cuban traditions, as well as introducing my background and experiences in these traditions. I have also begun discussing some of the practices in terms of their relevance to this thesis, especially trance, and how it operates within these ritual practices. Next I discuss actor/performer training as a means to furthering the discussion of ritual and performance, but more toward an articulation of an intercultural approach toward ritual forms in studio practice.

Chapter Two:

Of Methods and Mediums

In this chapter, I establish the ground rules for an art practice where the performers engage with Afro-Cuban rituals as a means of accessing character. I discuss the various strains of performer training in the United States, with attention to what is unique about the Southwest, to illustrate the training backgrounds for the performers in my studio work. I am developing a correspondence between the work of the performer and that of the trance medium, and toward that end, I next consider the phenomenological nature of character (in particular through the writings of Peggy Phelan, Philip Auslander, Rebecca Schneider, Herbert Blau, and Diana Taylor). This includes correspondences between conceptions of character in Western theatrical practice and conceptions of ancestor and spirit entities in Afro-Cuban ritual practice. This sets the groundwork for correspondences between the character a performer portrays, and the entity that possesses the medium. A more thorough phenomenology of character is developed further in Chapters Five and Six. To further establish correspondences, I introduce one of this work's more complicated knots, translating one worldview to another, which leads to a discussion of interculturality. Through this, I develop an ethos of translation that

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

serves to underlie the studio work and its reflective practices. Finally, I introduce the specific Afro-Cuban ritual practices that I am applying to the performance process.

To continue with the distinction, I reiterate that this is not ritual as performance, but ritual for performance. As I work with the concepts, the primary distinction between performance and ritual is that the former is directed toward the human, and the latter is directed toward the not-human (in an animistic ontology, everything has the potential for holding spirits, so I will refer to this as the spirit world). In ritual the knowledge is co-constituted between a mortal human and other realm (sometimes divine, sometimes the world of the dead, sometimes nature). In performance, the knowledge is co-constituted between the performer and the spectator. Expanding on Schechner's notion of ritual and play as 'twice-behaved behavior' (2002: 52), my notion of performance is as twice-behaved behavior for human spectators, and ritual is twice-behaved behavior for the spirit world. The latter part of this chapter includes the spirit world. Now I turn to performance, and performance training, with the human spectator in mind.

Performer Training Today: A Method for the Medium

The performers in my studio work have in common a connection to Arizona State University (ASU), located in Tempe, a city in the greater Phoenix area. Phoenix, in the state of Arizona in the southwestern United States, is the

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

sixth-largest city in the country, and has one of the ten largest metropolitan Latina/Latino populations. Phoenix has two equity theaters, a number of small theaters, and two or three that call themselves experimental. The majority of theatrical performance in Phoenix is in the style of contemporary American (modified) realism. Acting for the stage as a profession in the United States almost invariably necessitates membership in the Actors' Equity Association. The rules for the union make it difficult for an actor in Phoenix to work outside of equity houses, and cuts in arts funding in recent years have led to the closing down of three equity theaters. Smaller nonequity theaters tend toward work that is established and recognizable to a broad palette, competing with the equity theaters by offering similar fare on a smaller scale, and a cheaper ticket price. As a result, experimental performance is sparse, so people who are drawn to it can find each other pretty easily.

When I began seeking performers for this project, I was drawing from a specific population: local performance practitioners who have shown interest and aptitude for experimental performance practice, and who have expressed an interest in exploring ritual and working in altered states of consciousness. As we started working, we discovered that we had a further common frame of reference in that we all had university training from Arizona State University.

ASU's Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts (ASU Herberger Institute, 2016) has a reputation for experimental performance work and a strong emphasis on digital media in live performance, having recently been named the most innovative university in the United States (Faller, 2015). There

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

are strong intercultural currents, attested to by a unique doctoral program in Theatre and Performance of the Americas, which specializes in a hemispheric approach to performance, focusing on issues of globalization and the border (ASU Herberger Institute, 2016a). Performance undergraduates leave the institution having seen and participated in a number of experimental theatre works, as well as work that consciously engages with Southwestern identity (a mix of Native American, Latina/o, Euro-American and Asian-American cultures and histories). There is some innovation in terms of new performance methodologies, but performer training is by and large based in Stanislavsky's method, or its variations (going forward, when I refer to the method, I am referring to its variations, and when am specifically referring to Stanislavsky, I will state this as Stanislavsky's method).

The method is a primary source for performer training inside and outside the university system. Among all the acting theorists, Stanislavsky is 'the one with the broadest influence in the United States' (Enelow, 2015: 7). This is not to say that Stanislavsky's method is the subject of study, but Stanislavsky's method as filtered through a number of lenses. Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, the founders of Viewpoints, write, 'Our misunderstanding, misappropriation and miniaturization of the Stanislavsky system remains the bible for most practitioners' (2005: 15–16).

There is a lineage of followers who have translated Stanislavsky's method. The lineage in the U.S. began with his students, Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaya, who started the American Laboratory Theatre in New York City. They taught

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

Strasberg, Adler, Meisner, and Uta Hagen, who each branched out and taught their own versions of the method, each with their own emphases (Hull, 1985: 2). Strasberg and Adler have had the most influence on the method as practiced by the performers with whom I worked, so my focus is on these versions of the method, looking particularly at how character is perceived and constructed. A note here on my use of terms: I use the term *performer* rather than *actor*. This is because of an interdisciplinary liberty that the term *performer* offers, outside of theater contexts. In this section, however, I am working with some scholars and practitioners who are primarily concerned with actors in formal theater, and so the term *actor* will also appear in conjunction with their writings.

Strasberg's exercises in relaxation, concentration, and sense memory, along with Stanislavsky-derived concepts such as spine, inner action, objection, intention, and choices (Hull, 1985: 148), are part of the university-trained performer's knowledge base. Of the variations of Stanislavsky, Strasberg's is perhaps the most controversial. His liberal interpretation of emotional memory and his reliance on a popular and watered-down version of contemporary psychology (Hull, 1985: 18) contribute to a general mistrust of Strasberg's techniques (or rather, to an adherence of a purist notion regarding his techniques). Perhaps most questionable is Strasberg's perceived stress on the conflation of self and character. This was a radical departure from orthodox Stanislavsky, but not original, and followed a path set by Vakhtangov. Where Stanislavsky would have the actor ask, 'What would I do if I were the

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

character?’ Vakhtangov asks, ‘How would I motivate myself if I were the character?’ (Hull, 1985: 161). This signifies a shift, where, instead of the actor imagining herself as the character, she looks for aspects of the character within herself.

This is a sticking point that Adler uses as the crux of her variation of the method. She insists that the actor needs to return to imagining herself as the character, rather than finding herself in the character. ‘Hamlet was not “a guy like you”’ (Adler, 2000: 19). This variation came after she had been following Strasberg, and was growing disenchanted with the art form. She met Stanislavsky in Paris, her story goes, and they discussed the state of acting. When he learned of her disenchantment, he insisted she study with him. Over the next few months, he taught her his own version of his own method, after some years of reflection and revision. This meant a departure from the conflation of self and character, and a return to a consideration of the character’s given circumstances, as well as the actor’s capacity to imagine herself as the character (Adler, 2000: 36). In Adler’s method, Strasberg’s emphasis on emotional memory is likewise overturned. According to Adler, Strasberg’s emphasis on emotional or affective memory was based on Stanislavsky’s earlier thoughts. He later subordinated emotional memory to intellect and imagination, performing actions over conjuring emotions (Adler, 2000: 265).

Whether the actor is becoming the character or making imaginary associations, there is still a conflation of self and character at the heart of the

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

method. Phillip Zarrilli (b. 1947), a practitioner-theorist of intercultural theater from the United States, based in the United Kingdom since 2000, points out one of the more common conceptions of method actors, both from within the discipline, and as they are perceived in popular culture: 'Actors trained in the American method often approach characterization by "living the role," that is, erasing distinctions between "self"/"the real" and the fictional role' (1995: 19). Bert O. States (1929–2003), United States-based playwright and theorist, whose life work was toward a phenomenology of character, makes the link between performer and spectator when he says, 'All of the actor's artistic energies now seem to be bent toward "becoming" his character and, for the audience, they cease to be artistic energies and become the facts of his character's nature' (1995: 35). States implies that the conflation of self and character is not the sole prerogative of the performer, but necessarily depends upon the spectator as well. David Mamet (b. 1947), Chicago-based playwright and sometime theorist, on the other hand, disregards the value of any system that considers the inner life, or psychological investment, on the part of the performer:

The actor does not need to 'become' the character. The phrase, in fact, has no meaning. There *is* no character. There are only lines upon a page. They are lines of dialogue meant to be said by the actor. When he or she says them simply, in an attempt to achieve an object more or less like that suggested by the author, the audience sees an *illusion* of a character upon a stage. (1997: 9)

Zarrilli, States, and Mamet represent, in a general way, three threads of thought surrounding the method, from an entirely performer-centered orientation to a negotiation between performer and audience, and finally

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

toward an audience-centered approach toward belief in the reality of the character. For Zarrilli, the performer himself must believe he is the character. For States, both the actor and the audience believe in the actor's becoming the character. The audience is an integral part of his phenomenology because the actor 'on the audience side...makes theatre occur' (States, 1987: 14). For Mamet, the actor's belief is irrelevant, and what is necessary is proper technique to construct an illusion, one that only matters to the audience. In fact, for Mamet, the actor's belief in the conflation of self and character is entirely useless and time-consuming. What these have in common is the conception of character that is something that relies on faith or belief (the performer believes the character will incarnate, as it were). In fact, David Krasner sees this belief or faith as central to the method itself, where 'method acting is not so much a merging of character and self as it is an act of faith the actor imposes on the role. The actor builds on interpretation and inspiration; inspiration, or faith, is what gives the performance its definition' (Krasner, 2000: 15). The moment of theater is when this faith allows the character to inhabit a (temporary) reality.

Perhaps not distinct from belief is a tendency to see a character as psychologically consistent, and this depends on cultural constructions regarding the psyche. In the United States, there is a link between the method and Freud, although the link is one based in misinterpretation as well. In the United States, actors are 'conditioned by a Freudian-based, individually oriented ethos (Carnicke, 1998: 1) and this has been the source of some

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

erroneous conflation between Stanislavsky's conception of the unconscious and Freud's: 'Stanislavsky inherited and appropriated pre-Freudian concepts of the unconscious. Although there is evidence of the Freudian paradigm in Russia, it came later and had a far lesser impact than in European countries' (Whyman, 2008: 4). Stanislavsky's idea of the unconscious was not so much that it is irrational, as in Freud, but rather, uncontrolled. It is mystical but rational, following earlier psychology and investigations into yoga (Whyman, 2008: 245). These earlier psychologies centered less on the internal experience of the subject, and more on observable behaviors, so that 'while the method may borrow from Freudian psychology, it is fundamentally not Freudian but Pavlovian' (Krasner, 2000: 13). Krasner here is writing about Strasberg's interpretations, and Strasberg denied the connection between his method and Freudian psychology.

Although the evidence suggests that there is no link between Freudian psychoanalytic theory and Stanislavsky's method, there is certainly a link in how the method has translated in the United States. Performer training includes some discussion of Freud because it is foundational to modern understanding of human behavior. While Strasberg denied the connection, it is true that 'for Strasberg, as for Freud, all action referred back to psychic life; physical manifestations were secondary...his method used the tropes of psychoanalytic discovery' (Enelow, 2015: 41). What this implies, then, is that the method as taught in the United States carries some resonance to the cultural milieu of the

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

1950s, when it came into prominence, and that milieu was immersed in Freud (Burnham, 2012).

In each variation of the method, the performer has a relationship with the unconscious, whether it is irrational or mystical. Like the psyche itself, the relationship between performer and character is ethereal in nature, and one of the performer's elemental tools. It is only fitting that performance, an ethereal phenomenon, uses ethereal tools. What do phenomenologists say about character? I am most concerned with the phenomenological experience of the performer, but I need to understand something of the phenomenology of performance as a whole in order to contextualize the place of character within it. I now turn toward some of the more prominent theories of performance phenomenology. This is only the beginning of a theoretical discussion, to articulate what is happening when a performer is inhabiting a character. Later, in Chapter Five, I return to the theorists mentioned here for an analysis of the performer's experience in ritual contexts (and in Chapter Six for an application of the theory in relation to trance performance), but for now I ask: what happens to the performer in a performance context? What is happening when a performer is inhabiting a character?

Toward a Phenomenology of Performing

Herbert Blau, whose work as a theater practitioner (it was his troupe who presented the famed performance of *Godot* at San Quentin in 1957) would

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

inform his theoretical writing, wrote about theater as existing at a vanishing point (1982: 28), because of the mortality of the performer's body. Peggy Phelan, a performance studies and feminist scholar working first at New York University and then at Stanford, conceived of performance as something that 'becomes itself through disappearance' (1993: 146), and is always unrepeatable. Philip Auslander, Georgia Tech professor and theorist of performance and digital culture, on the other hand, conceived of performance in terms of liveness, and for him, liveness always exists 'within an economy of reproduction' (1999: 16). Rebecca Schneider, performance theorist at Brown University, moving in a more ghostly direction, sees performance as the 'recomposition of remains' (2011: 98); performance does not disappear, but on the contrary, is what is left. For Diana Taylor, Mexican-born and based at NYU, and the founding director of the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, performances are 'vital acts of transfer' (2003: 2–3), where moments from the cultural archive are embodied in the performer in order to become part of the repertoire. Each of these phenomenological perspectives points toward performance as an engagement with ephemerality. Becoming, dying, and cultural memory are the hidden subjects of every performance, where the spectator engages with what it is to be here in a mortal body right now.

For the performer, this begins with the body. States' phenomenology is grounded in the sensory experience of performance. This is where the experience of performance happens, in 'our sensory engagement with its empirical objects. This site is the point at which art is no longer only

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

language' (States, 1987: 7). It is a site of 'phenomenal renewal' (States, 1987: 13), and in theater this depends on the experience of character. 'The inevitable starting point of any discussion of the actor's presence on stage is the fact that we see him as both character and performer' (States, 1987: 119). The pleasure of the spectator in performance consists of watching individuals consent 'to become the embodiment of this thing' (States, 1987: 157). The actor is a storyteller, 'whose specialty is that he is the story he is telling' (States, 1987: 123).

Storytelling includes the possibility of different types of stories and different ways of telling these stories. States establishes three modes of being for a performer in performance, and these take into account approaches based on the method, but allow for other approaches that are not necessarily based in psychological realism. They each offer different possibilities for embodiment of a character. They are:

I (actor)	=	Self-expressive mode
You (audience)	=	Collaborative mode
He (character)	=	Representational mode

(States, 1995: 23)

In the first, the self-expressive mode, the performer is speaking her inner thoughts and feelings. The performer carries the weight of representation as the character, while also losing the pretense of being lost in this representation. In this mode, the performer and the spectator are aware of the double affect, where she is both artist and character at once:

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

It is our awareness of the artist in the actor...there ought to be a word, or a way of isolating, something as powerful as the pleasure we take when artistry becomes the object of our attention. (States, 1995: 26)

In the second, collaborative, mode, there is a similar doubling, where the performer is stepping outside the time (and sometimes place) of the story, in order to comment on the action. Here, 'the audience has the status of a confidant character in neo-classical tragedy, unlike the real audience that modern participation theatre tries to involve quite literally in the play' (States, 1995: 29). The dramatic pretense is still at work, where the spectator and performer are still within the confines of the theatrical world, but the collaborative mode allows for an intellectual and emotional distance. Brecht's actors work 'primarily in the collaborative mode' (States, 1995: 31), because they are commenting on the action (as performers, consciously not getting lost in representation), taking the spectator into the world in order to elicit reflection between the world of the play and the current political situation. Brecht's actors are always outside of the third mode, the representational. In this mode, there is slippage between performer and character, and the pleasure of the performance is based on the completeness of this slippage. On Eleanora Duse, States comments that 'nightly she performed only the miracle of her own disappearance' (1995: 27–28).

The limit of these modes is that they do not include the breaking down of the barrier between art and life that is characteristic of some of the more radical theatrical experiments. For States, the authenticity of the performance is still based on the premise that the performer is firmly inside the story she is

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

telling. There are, to be sure, plenty of performance techniques and strategies that fall outside this spectrum (I am thinking primarily of Grotowski's *via negativa* [1969: 133], which could be seen as the performer before the first mode, where the *self* in self-expression is stripped away). However, there are obvious links between this phenomenology of performance and a phenomenology of trance performance.

Further, to return to the presence of the performer in relation to the method, there is the notion of authenticity. This is the last concept I am considering in relation to performance phenomenology, because of the persistence of the notion of authenticity in the United States, and also for its applicability in how my elders talk and think about trance. In terms of actor training, the method is linked with authenticity in performance (of course, in certain kinds of experimental theater, performance art, and variations, there is a prolonged contestation of this very notion of authenticity). According to Krasner, Stanislavsky's method allowed his actors to perform with a believability that has become a cornerstone of the method: 'Authenticity presupposes honesty and sincerity rather than deception. It holds that one can exhibit a true self based on self-conscious awareness of identity' (Krasner, 2000: 25). Further, this self-consciousness is based in merging the conscious and the unconscious in order to present a true self. This was already present, or emerging, as part of the sense of self-identity in the United States in the 1920s, so that 'by the time of Stanislavsky's tour of the United States in 1923, the nation was responsive to his ideas of authentic behavior' (Krasner, 2000: 26).

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

The spectator sees the actor as both performer and character, and this is also operative in the performer's experience. Being both a self and an other simultaneously is the experience of the performer and, as I suggest, the medium. Authenticity is based on the congruence of the conscious and unconscious (sometimes referred to as the subconscious). This is an embodied experience that carries some weight from popular psychology as to the notion of what a subject is. When I turn to discussing how the performer's phenomenological experience (filtered through a particular kind of training) enters into a ritual context, there are some radical shifts. Identity, or sense of self, is based on cultural constructions, and in cultural ritual contexts this sense of self has to shift to be reconstructed in a new ontology. It then becomes an artistic as well as an ethical question. I now turn to this ethical question.

Toward a Responsible Interculturality

An attitude of respect was one of my primary considerations for establishing an ethical performance process in terms of the participants and cultural practices represented. I approached the ritual aspects of the work with respect for the traditions, and I approached the performers with respect for their cultural frames of reference. I had to recognize that every performer carries her own integrity of experience, where the terms for that experience are based within its own logic and framework. By entering the conversation knowing that there are different logics and frameworks at play, there is a

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

mutual understanding that this is boundary work. Working within distinct ontological traditions is boundary work, both in terms of the disciplinary boundaries of artistic practice and research (Borgdorff and Schwab, 2012: 117), and in terms of cultural politics. In the United States, we seem to be living through another period of breakdown of structures from within, caused by the inherent racism within these same structures, and it is increasingly difficult to have conversations about culture. Victor Turner writes about Eleggua, the Orisha of the crossroads, and His willingness to disrupt boundaries (1986: 55), suggesting that disruption is sometimes the only path forward.

Lukumí practices tend to absorb and integrate other cultural practices, as Stephan Palmié, anthropologist and Santería scholar at the University of Chicago, suggests (Palmié, 2013: 3–4). This is true both historically, and currently. Lukumí is at once global in practice and local in origin, with hybridity embedded in its very nature. Based in Yoruba cosmology, it incorporates ritual procedures from Spiritism, saints from Catholicism, and a host of other variants. It is an adaptable ontology with a history of being misunderstood. Just as ‘it is conceited to assume that one has solutions for people whose lives one does not share and whose problems one does not know’ (Feyerabend, 1989: 266), it would be conceited to assume that the transmission of a way of knowing would be a flawless translation.

Part of my criteria for selecting the performers was that they had an interest in intercultural work. None of the performers were practitioners of Lukumí or Palo. I was a ritual insider, and they were ritual outsiders. In order to

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

create a practice based in mutual respect between the cultural practices and the cultural statuses of the participants, I adopted an approach that was primarily intercultural. The discussions of interculturality in cultural discourse in the eighties and nineties have moved from identity politics toward a focus on globalism (Dalmia, 2006: 282). Although the conversation has shifted, questions of identity politics still haunt the discourse, suggesting that they still carry weight, that there are questions that remain unanswered. I do not assume that my work answers the questions, but it contributes to the conversation. Before I discuss the specific ethical practice in my studio work, I offer definitions of the terms *multicultural*, *intercultural*, and *transcultural*.

I borrow from Vince Marotta's work in the social sciences, because his definitions are both appropriate and elegantly simple. He writes, 'To be multicultural, intercultural or transcultural may refer to a process of mobility, distancing and transcendence' (2014: 100), respectively. *Multicultural* refers to the experience of the privileged when traveling through the world, *intercultural* is where there are encounters between cultures and a respectful distance is maintained, and *transcultural* refers to those things that transcend cultural barriers.

The 'respectful distance' inherent to intercultural practice is part of an ethical equation in performance work where cultural complexity is at play. On the one hand, there is the respectful distance for cultural forms that have a history of being maligned in popular culture. On the other hand, the spiritual nature of the practices mandates attention to guiding the participants toward

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

respect rather than belief. To believe implies being immersed, and to respect implies distancing. Zarrilli, who offers one of the more positive models for creating performance work of multiple cultural complexity, consciously invokes the term *intercultural*, drawing on non-Western philosophies to (re)consider Western approaches (2000: 8). This suggests a dialogue based on mutual interdependence. For him, interculturality allows for a conversation that does not attempt universality, where 'codes and conventions easily read by those within one culture may be opaque to the outside' (Zarrilli, 2000: 187).

Toward an ethical practice that is true to the terms of the cultural practices, I also invoke transculturality, but in a very specific sense. Fernando Ortíz, one of the more foundational (and problematic) ethnographers and anthropologists writing on Cuban culture in the early half of the twentieth century, defines transculturation thusly: 'Hemos escogido el vocabulo transculturación para expresar los variadísimos fenómenos que se originan en Cuba por las complejísimas transmutaciones que aquí se verifican' (Ortíz, 1973: 129). Or: 'Here we have chosen the term transculturation to express the various phenomena that originate in Cuba through the complex transmutations that support them here' (my translation). In his sense, *trans-* refers not to universality, but to travel and origins. These are forms that began in other countries, and, once in Cuba, attain a new origin. It is the act of transmutation that gives them a new birth, as it were, but one that is based in a history of violence and oppression.

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

It is ethical practice in this case to maintain something of interculturalism and transculturalism at once, in order to maintain the respectful distance while still being mindful of the history of violence (and the ghosts of colonization that accompany this violence). Transculturality carries trauma, but it also carries a tone of cultural reclamation. Palmié describes Ortiz's transculturalism as 'a proposal for a self-consciously "modernist" New World nationalism transcending the radical and cultural prescriptions imposed upon Latin American nations by European and North American intellectuals' (Palmié, 2013: 97), and thus, 'to be Cuban was to be in flux; to share in a condition of instability; to be always on one's way to a novel predication' (2013, 97). An ethical approach toward the translation of cultural practices, in this case, depends upon a respect for the roots. Marotta's definition of *intercultural*, along with Ortiz's conception of *transcultural*, allow access that is respectful to the traditions and the histories of those traditions.

Precedents/Problems

At this point I look at approaches toward cultural translation that have proven problematic, in order to understand further some of the pitfalls inherent in cross-cultural work.

There are threads of an anti-colonialist mission in the historical avant-garde. The dadaists and surrealists looked to cultures outside

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

Europe—they were looking for methods for breaking the stronghold of European centrism. These impulses often contained elements of universalism and racism, where movements like primitivism (Melzer, 1994: 43) inadvertently reinscribed the colonial impulses they were trying to cast off. Artaud's theories, it could be argued, center around certain mistranslations (or rather, a refusal to translate). His essay *The Theatre and Its Double* is based on an erroneous understanding of Balinese shadow theater (Dalmia, 2006: 285). Likewise Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* (Brook: 2013) and Schechner's rasaboxes (Schechner: 2008) have been vilified in different circles for their shortcomings in cultural translation, Brook for eurocentrism and Schechner for universalism (Dalmia, 2006: 288–9). The particular pattern they follow is one where the work is, ultimately, cross-cultural in its conception and uni-cultural in its execution. It speaks to a Western spectator by virtue of removing what is untranslatable as excess, and lifting rituals out of their historical and cultural context without considering the new contexts that necessarily arise in new situations (Dalmia, 2006: 286).

I aim for the respectful distance of interculturality, but with the understanding that I expect my best intentions to be considered shortsighted by the next generation. Within that limitation, I construct work according to an intercultural impulse where multiple cultural universes exist in complexity, allowing for mistranslations and indecipherability as an integral part of the work, avoiding the tendency to reconcile the differences in the name of a facile

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

multiculturalism. A problematic translation can fuel an inquiry rather than delay it:

Performance carries the possibility of challenge, even self-challenge, within it. As a term simultaneously connoting a process, a praxis, an episteme, a mode of transmission, an accomplishment, and a means of intervening in the world, it far exceeds the possibilities of these other words offered in its place. Moreover, the problem of untranslatability, as I see it, is actually a positive one, a necessary stumbling block that reminds us that ‘we’—whether in our various disciplines, or languages, or geographic locations throughout the Americas—do not simply or unproblematically understand each other. (Taylor, 2003: 15)

Precedents/Models

There are models which seek to consciously avoid essentialist, universalist, or colonizing patterns. Zarrilli’s Psychophysical Acting is a method for the ‘embodiment and shaping of energy’ (2009: 42). The approach is for the actor’s development, rather than the spectator’s consumption. This calls for a conscious avoidance of an aesthetic of otherness, in which the exotic is captured for its power and its essence squeezed out to fit into an alien context (Fusco, 2000: 7).

Feliciano Sánchez Chan, a Yucatecan Maya theater practitioner, presented intercultural festivals under the auspices of his organization, Teatro Comunitario (Underiner, 2004: 104), in the mid-nineties. He organized and presented diverse theater works from Mayan groups around the Yucatán, for a primarily Mayan audience. Rather than understating cultural differences to present an illusion of unity among all Mayan people, cultural difference within Mayan communities was central to the performances. By presenting Mayan works for

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

Mayan communities, rather than for an outsider audience, the community could see itself reflected with nuances that are not possible in work presented for wider cultural understanding.

Jodorowsky's *Psicomagia* (Jodorowsky, 2004: 155) is a technique for spiritual healing that is part of the ongoing performance of his own life. Its roots are in theater, but it functions in a spiritual realm where the line between art and life is thin. In public salons, Jodorowsky conducts tarot readings, performing the role of trickster/magician. He leads his audience through personal rituals, which are often prescriptions for conducting performative actions to heal psychic wounds. Maya Deren, who proclaimed her own roots in surrealism, developed a surrealist vocabulary for cinema (Clark, 1988: 142) that was simultaneously psychoanalytical and based in ritual, drawing on her background as an initiate in Haitian Vodou. Ana Mendieta's earth art (Ruido, 2002; 21) connected (or better, reconnected) the body to nature through an aesthetic that was grounded in Santería, and was influential to the body-art practices of the 1970s and beyond. These three examples are particularly noteworthy because they draw on ritual from particular cultural systems and traditions, and apply them in new contexts. The charges of universalism or essentialism do not seem to apply here, as they place themselves in service to the ritual systems they explore, rather than acting as if the systems serve them. The artists also allow a certain esotericism into their work; in fact, it could be argued that the esoteric is absolutely central, where symbols and actions are

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

left untranslated or unexplained. The work communicates, in part, the impossibility of an absolute representational communication.

Drawing on some of the attributes from the examples above, there are criteria for existing models for ethical practice: first, drawing frameworks from the cultural system itself (i.e., from Lukumí and/or Palo, rather than a European ritual framework); second, maintaining the respectful distance necessary for ethical intercultural practice, with attention to the tradition's transcultural nature; third, taking a position of radical subjectivity from within the ritual system (vs. the position of a performance practitioner borrowing from world ritual culture as though it were a palette). These were my guidelines. There were also more practical, and less philosophical, considerations at stake, regarding the psychic and spiritual safety of the performers.

With this safety and comfort in mind, I set a process for the studio work. First, before beginning ritual or rehearsal work, there was a thorough discussion of the ritual techniques in terms of their context in Lukumí and Palo practices. In order to keep the respectful distance, the performers understood that they were presented with ritual techniques that were modified for non-initiates. Next, during the meditation and trance work, there were always two participants who would not go under, in order to be available for helping someone out of an unwanted state of consciousness, should there be a need. Third, there was a consensual approach to the practices themselves, with safety points within the ritual process, where the performers could choose to go further, or stop if they were uncomfortable. Further, there was a safeguard

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

based in the cosmology we were exploring: the performers were given mirrors, mirrors that were charged with spiritual energy, so that they could control the flow of energy themselves, with volition to stop the flow if they chose. Having discussed the ethical questions regarding the translation of Lukumí and Palo practices for non-initiates, I now look at the practices themselves, focusing on how they were modified for the performers.

Toward an Ethical Ritual and Performance Practice

For me, like one of the most powerful, perhaps the most powerful spell that there is, is the gaze. Um. Which has a name in Candomblé, it's *arara*. It was explained to me by Mae Stella, who is a very well-known *Yaborisha* priestess in Brazil, I was visiting her in Bahia, and I was, uh, she is a daughter of *Ochosi* as well—by now she must be in her nineties—and she explained to me using Disney. She asked me, 'Do you know Donald Duck?' and I thought, 'Okay, where is she going with this?' and she was saying, like, 'You know, like, in the cartoons, when you see the character and, uh, arrows coming out of the, uh, eyes, uh, of that character. This is *arara*. This is what you have to be careful with.' It's also significant because everybody does that, every—everybody is a witch, everybody is performing witchcraft whether they know it or not. (Costa McElroy, 24 December 2014)

Before I discuss the specifics, there are some lingering general considerations regarding performance and ritual as they are applied to performance practice that would be appropriately discussed here. The radical theatrical experiments in the United States in the 1950s and '60s set a certain precedent for ritual in contemporary performance. Open Theater, Bread and Puppet Theater, the Performance Group, and the Living Theatre are some of the more well-known groups who experimented with the idea of performance as a ritual between the performer and spectator (Heddon and Milling, 2006: 49). At times this led to unexpected vulnerability, where the

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

performer-participants found themselves elevated to a new state of consciousness, but without any guidance on how to negotiate with the non-elevated world afterwards. Although my studio work does involve some ritual aspects for the spectator, my focus is on ritual for the performer, in community with other performers. Ritual vulnerability happens in the rehearsal space, not when spectators are present. Following the frameworks from Lukumí and Palo Monte, most ritual is not, generally speaking, ritual for the public, but open only to practitioners. I set out to create the conditions for a ritual experience that might include altered states of consciousness, and this needed to take place in a closed, safe environment. Further, I wanted to put safeguards in place so that they could negotiate with the world afterwards without experiencing unexpected emotional transitions that often accompany such work.

The rituals with the performers were private, with fixed contexts. Duration was set, and there was very little improvisation. The rituals were drawn from Afro-Cuban spiritual systems and modified to fit performance contexts. They were not authentic Afro-Cuban rituals, nor were they ever presented as such. The performers understood they were part of a new, exploratory method. They would occasionally be exposed to some ceremonial ritual elements (for example, hearing the prayers and witnessing processes for certain divination techniques), but not as practitioners. Further, whatever repetitions would accumulate would be through their mutual participation, and in this way there was more of a secular ritual experience in place. There were techniques for

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

bringing them back from the elevated spaces, so that the world afterwards would not require a complex negotiation. They understood that the contexts were based in Afro-Cuban cosmologies, but they were not required to enter into the spirituality inherent in those cosmologies, although they could pursue this on their own if they wished.

These are the distinctions between ritual and performance, but there are some elements about Afro-Cuban ritual, particularly concerning the possession experience, that complicate the distinctions. These complications also make it appropriate for application in performance. The Orishas are both material and ethereal. They have their forms in material objects (not to be confused with the Western notion of the fetish, where the object is a representation; in Yoruba cosmology, the object is not a representation but is in fact the actual Orisha). In the case of spirit possession, the Orisha takes form in the body of the medium in ethereal form. Spirit possession is unlike other rituals, where the outcome is less fixed, and the enactment is performative toward a human spectator. The point of possession is so that the deity can come in contact with the living. I have observed this phenomena multiple times, noticing the performativity of the medium being possessed, and the performativity of the Orisha in possession of the medium. This led to certain questions: is the medium's experience of possession similar to the performer's experience of performing as a character? Is the ethereality of the Orisha like the ethereality of a character in a performance? And finally, how could these techniques work for performers trained in Western theatrical contexts? The techniques would have to be

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

modified to fit an entirely different context, still respectful and accurate to the traditions, but also metaphorically consistent with the universe of the performer. It would be best to lead the performers into this ontological universe slowly, using metaphors that were familiar. This led to the devising of the use of spells, charms, and trance.

Before I speak of them individually, *spell*, *charm*, and *trance* are loaded terms, having associations with *brujería*, or sorcery. Brujería has pejorative associations, and is often translated as 'witchcraft'. Some Lukumí and Palo practitioners refer to themselves as *brujas* or *brujos*, taking the negative associations as a means of demonstrating power, or more ironically, as a recuperation of a term that has historically been used to oppress people. On the other hand, *brujería* can simply signify the skillful manipulation of natural forces in order to effect a change (Cabrera, 1983: 20). The change can be in another individual, a situation, or oneself. Brujería is a technology, and by invoking these terms, I am introducing the performers to the idea of learning a technology, one that also manipulates natural forces in order to affect a change. At this point, the Artistic Director's authorial voice starts to weave its way in, describing the processes and making some poetic interventions.

Spell

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The process of the spell is like this: the performers gather in the altar room, where the Orishas live in pots. They are led individually to a specific Orisha, to whom they are instructed to whisper a wish. It is important that no one else

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

knows. The performer is asking an Orisha for a favor, and it is a secret between them. This starts the spell. The Orisha is in control. Something larger than us. Something older, not human. When you want an energetic shift, and you ask the energy to help you shift, something happens. The spell is where it begins because the spell covers everything, and includes everything that follows.

Lukumí and Palo rituals are designed to open communication between the human and the spirit worlds. The more complex forms of communication (divination, possession, ritual sacrifice) are not available to outsiders. However, there are prayers within these rituals, and one does not need to be an insider in order to speak to the spirits. The simple act of asking a spirit for help in some challenging life situation begins an energy exchange, and sets in motion the spell.

For my purposes, the definition of spell closely aligns with the Bantu word *kanga*, for which the literal translation is 'knotting' (Martinez-Ruiz, 2013: 168), with implications for the process of coding and decoding. To be under a spell is to be tied to a metaphorical universe for a time, and this universe is a construction that can be approached through discovering and using its own codes. I chose a spell as the central part of this method because of its apparent associations with worlds already familiar to performers. Being in a play, or being inside a performance, is very much like being under the influence of a spell, an alternate universe with its own rules and codes. To tell performers that they are being placed under a spell is, in a sense, removing a metaphorical pretense. A spell is best understood through the mechanisms which support it, so I now turn to charm.

Charm

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Without entering into the spell, one is not susceptible to the power of the charm, which gives spiritual reinforcement for the trance. After the performers enter the spell, the Ritual Director instructs them to focus on a secret desire. Together, they discuss the general nature of this desire (to attract or to repel). He instructs them to bring ingredients, usually something personal, from their body. These are then supplemented with ritual ingredients, ones that are known for attracting the Orisha's favor (such as spices or fruit or incense). The Ritual Director puts the ingredients in a bundle—every performer gets a personal bundle. He ties them in ritual ways, and leaves them on one of his altars for a certain amount of time, one that varies with each charm. Because there are two religious traditions, Lukumí and Palo, there are two distinctive altars. The ones for the Orishas are generally kept inside the house. The ones for the Palo spirits, called *prendas*, are kept outside, usually in a locked shed.

The Ritual Director acts as a facilitator between the human and spirit world. Through the charm, the performers have a connection to a world of spirits. They know something about their personal charm, but they don't know everything. There has to be a tension between the hidden and the revealed. A gesture is put forth into the spirit world, an attempt to start a conversation.

There is a possibility for communication, but never an aim for total understanding. Respect for something which cannot be translated is a primary element in intercultural work.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Like the use of a theatrical prop, the charm is one of the most simple and effective tools toward shifting from the world of the performer to the world of the character. The charm is the object that shows up once the spell is under way. It says this world is real, and it says that you have not left all of yourself behind. Generally speaking, a charm works on the principle of *like attracts like*. It contains the essence, or energy, of something that you want more of. A charm is like a mirror, reflecting something you want so that you can draw it toward you.

DRAMATURG

In ritual contexts, charms are constructed more or less in the following way: sacred objects, selected with the idea of placing a spell on someone in mind, are placed in a cloth, ritually tied, and folded (or *futika*, from Thompson, 1984: 131).

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

The tying and folding are the actions that set the object in motion. In fact, the action is a pun on what the spell does. When you are tying a charm, you are tying that person to you. 'The original charm was "made up of a mixture of earth from a grave plus palm wine and is believed to bring good luck"' (Thompson, 1984: 105). This comes from the southern United States, where slave culture brought the charm into popular culture. Its roots (no pun intended) are from the Kongo: 'Kongo-Cuban priests activated old, important charms by singing and drawing a sacred point' (Thompson, 1984: 110). Drawing refers to the *firma* (literally translated as 'signature'), another Kongo invention, where a sign is drawn (usually with white chalk) on the bottom of a pot that holds an ancestral spirit, or on the ground, or on a human body. Firms are iconographic representations of ancestral spirits (the Muertos in Palo Monte), and can become literal doorways through which those spirits may enter.

I use charms because they have metaphorical familiarity to the performers, from popular culture, and because of their resemblance to the actor's prop. There is another charm that they carry with them, a mirror. Charms are like mirrors, reflecting desires, and mirrors have a string of associations from both European and African culture. Arnaud Maillet discusses the European history of the mirror as a tool for divination, contemplation, and hypnotism in *The Claude Glass*. He focuses on the black mirror, because of its particular use in necromancy. In Kongo belief, mirrors serve the same function, as communication devices between worlds: 'The mirror reflects only shadows, because only the dead can be seen in it' (Maillet, 2004: 67).

DRAMATURG

In Kongo religion, apart from its means to access the world of the dead, the mirror is used for mystical vision in a broader sense. Wyatt MacGaffey, in a discussion of Kongo art objects, describes a certain 'nkisi for divination, a function for which the conspicuous mirror on this piece is appropriate' (1991: 14). Robert Farris Thompson mentions a piece of mirror as an ingredient in a charm, 'again for mystic vision' (1984: 25). Mirrors are not only for visionary purposes. They also serve as a visual reminder of the object's power:

Spirit-embodiment materials are usually wrapped or concealed in a charm, but such objects as mirrors or pieces of porcelain attached to the exterior of

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

the nkisi may also signify power—the flash and arrest of the spirit.
(Thompson, 1984: 117–118)

Fu-Kiau Bunseki, scholar and native practitioner of Kongo religion (who went across the *Kalunga* line in 2014, that is, crossing the watery boundary between the living and the dead), writes about the mirror's uses in revealing the hidden in the present: 'Mirrors are symbols of written words to tell you what the *nganga* [priest or priestess] does—that he is trained to see what goes on in the actual society' (Fu-Kiau: n.d.). It also serves as protection: 'Mirrors also of course deflect negative energies that are coming towards the Nkisi or towards the individual that the Nkisi is helping or who the Nkisi watches over' (Tutukenda, n.d.).

I introduced the performers to these general concepts of the mirror before giving them their own personal mirror, which would serve as the communication between themselves and the character. Further, it was an access point that they could control, opening or closing it of their own volition outside of the rehearsal room. While there were charms that were constructed with individual qualities, the mirror was uniform. All the performers were given the same mirror. Through the mirror I could introduce another aspect of Kongo cosmology, the world of the Dogs.

Dogs can live in the village or in the forest, where we find, respectively, the societies of the living and the dead. Dogs are considered to be emissaries in between realms, inhabiting one or both simultaneously. Further, dogs are connected to mirrors, both having the ability to communicate with the living and the dead simultaneously. "'Mirror (talatala) and dog (mbwa) symbolize the same thing among the Bakongo.'" Thus a dog or doglike nkisi is often used by Kongo mystics to see beyond our world' (Thompson, quoting Fu-Kiau, 1984: 121). For the performers living in the Southwest, they were already familiar with

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

spirit animals from the iconography found in pop culture shamanism (Garber, 2014). The dog is also a recurring motif within the play texts, as well as an element of the rehearsal/ritual process.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

There is a physical dog in the room, the dog that lives with me. There is the idea of the spirit dog. In this way, there is a connection between worlds, where something familiar (a dog) can be, unexpectedly, a different kind of familiar. It opens up the idea that things are not necessarily what they seem. It opens up the possibility that not everything will be translated, that the animal world may not speak to the human world with an entirely accurate translation.

They are under the spell, and these charms open up the other worlds.

Once the performer has the charm, there is a personal connection to the spirit world, and a link to their own sense of self, and in this way, the charm serves as a safety cord between one world and the next. It gives them the spiritual reinforcement to enter into the trance.

Trance

The way I am working with trance is designed to invoke a similar state of possession by an ancestor. In Houk's two categories of trance (Houk, 1995: 117), where heavy trance suggests a deity, and light trance suggests the presence of an ancestor, this is the latter category, closer to ancestor possession than possession by an Orisha or a Muerto.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The performer, having entered into a spell that is prescribed to last for the duration of the preparation and performance of the studio work, and having a personal charm that gives her a personal connection to the spirit world, has the preparation and protection necessary to enter an altered state of consciousness.

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

There are guided meditations, led by the Ritual Director, designed to move the performer to a state of light receptivity, one that is conducive to light possession by an ancestor spirit (this can be seen as a literal ancestor spirit, or a feeling of calm, or an aspect of their own personality). They are instructed to let that enter into their consciousness, and they come back to a waking awareness with that still in their consciousness. Then we begin. We rehearse. At the end of the rehearsal, we gather in a circle, around the candle, and the Ritual Director circles behind them, sprinkling cascarilla, white chalk made from eggshell that is sacred to Obatala, and known for its powers in healing and sealing, over their heads. In this way, the communication is stopped, or closed for the evening, and we disperse.

The knowledge of trance is embodied knowledge. In Lukumí and Palo the state of trance is primarily achieved through dance. In Haiti, Cuba, and Brazil, 'these worshippers have looked to the dancing body as an embodiment of philosophy for centuries' (Daniel, 2005: 85). The dancer's body is on a confluence of planes that intersect and connect. This is a version of trance, translated for performers who do not have access to the same embodied experience. Such a temporary embodiment, no matter how complete, does not allow one the same access to the repertoire as one who was born into the culture. What is embodied in this work is something in between cultures. Its purpose is not toward merging with the divine (although that may be part of the performer's experience). It is for connecting the performer to their character. The method works toward some degree of merging the performer's internal world with that of the character. Spell, charm, and trance offer a way into another merging of self and other.

Further, there is already a history of associating acting with trance possession. The association is, in part, from legends and apocryphal stories

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

(David Mamet suggesting that in the Middle Ages actors used to be buried with a stake through the heart; 1997: 6). There are real examples, such as Peter Sellers, the film actor most famous for his portrayal of Inspector Clouseau. His performance practice included and even depended upon contact with invisible forces: 'I've had a strange thing that has followed me all my life, some special person in the other world who takes an interest in me and guards over me' (Sellers qtd. in Evans, 1968: 226).

Compare a statement from my godfather, Robert, about entering into a state of possession:

I know that I remember saying to myself, and I think it was because I'd had that experience with channeling that, 'I'm gonna let this happen, you know, I want, I want this to happen and I'm gonna let it happen, 'cause I'm not scared of it'. (Johnson, 4 February 2015)

to this statement from Sellers:

It's rather like being a medium...and laying yourself wide open and saying, 'I want a character to inhabit my body' or 'I want a spirit to take charge of me so that I can produce what I hope to produce'. (Evans, 1968: 234)

Spell, charm, and trance have counterparts in the world of performer training (the world of the play, the props, the character work). There is a profound ontological difference, but there is also a structural familiarity so that we could always return to a familiar place. These were the building blocks (spell, charm, and trance) for moving a performer from a Western theatrical background toward working in an African-derived ritual context. These were the methods for the studio work. For collecting data, I took video documentation of the rehearsal and performance process, kept a log of autobiographical writing that served as a journal of my own subjective process, filmed video interviews with

Chapter Two: Of Methods and Mediums

the performers after each of the five studio works were completed, and held regular rehearsal debriefings. These methods were conducted with the intention of collecting information about the phenomenological experience of being in a trance. These constituted the practical activities designed to bring ritual into performance. The studio work is also informed by a number of other contexts outside of the method, which also contribute to its being conducive to intercultural work in general, informed by Afro-Cuban ritual specifically. I will next discuss in detail the contexts for the studio work, leading to a discussion of the construction of the performance texts. This will prepare the reader for a discussion of each of the five studio works.

Chapter Three:

The Monsters Contexts

Continuing from the tension between ritual and performance, and looking at actor training in relation to ritual practice and the intercultural issues that arise, I now turn to a discussion of the studio work. In order to go into detail about the studio work next in Chapter Four, where I discuss each of the *Monsters of the Sea* (MOTS) performance pieces, I will here provide the reader with contexts for the work. In this way, the reader can be aware of the performance traditions informing my work, along with a sense of the work's trajectories.

First, I give a short history of my work with two theater groups for whom I serve/d as a founding member: Theater in My Basement (TIMB) and Howl Theatre Project. This will reveal some of my roots. Then I follow the lineage of the experimental performance work that has inspired and provided context for my work. Next, I discuss these contexts as I have applied them, focusing on performance styles, presentation modes, and the relationship between written text and performance. This will lead to a discussion of the specific studio works in turn in the next chapter, and subsequently to the articulation of one of the studio research outcomes, the Kanga method (a performance method for

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

intercultural work where ritual forms serve to guide performers in non-ritual contexts).

History of TIMB and Howl

In 1996, I spent five months living in southern Mexico, where my then-partner was working on her doctoral dissertation on Mayan theater. This was early in the Zapatista rebellion, and there was a resurgence in intellectual, artistic, and political discourse on Mayan identity in particular and interculturality in general. From these experiences, I created a solo performance work, *Mexotica*, and performed it in my living room in Seattle for invited spectators. These performances sparked an interest for theater in small, informal spaces. We moved to Minneapolis in 1997, and when we bought a house with a basement in 1999, I started TIMB, a company devoted to presenting alternative performance works in (usually) small spaces. In 2001, we moved to Phoenix, and in 2002, I began a new version of TIMB. This was a nonprofit theater group that specialized in intercultural performance work. TIMB presented approximately fifty events over the next eleven years, until 2013. For nine of these years, I produced and curated a festival of experimental intercultural performance work called Teatro Caliente, presenting three-day festivals showcasing twenty to thirty works of theater and performance art centered on cultural identity that was representative of Phoenix, focusing on Latin and Native American identity, with some European-

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

rooted work. The idea was to create a space where marginalized groups could make performances and determine the modes of representation within the context of an artistic conversation with the local community.

It would be difficult to mention every collaborator with TIMB, but there are a few whose influences are especially profound: Cherri Macht, Matt Wagner, Sara Sanabia, Brandon Chase Goldsmith, Jonathan Hernandez, and Ilana Lydia. It was particularly my work with Natalia Jaeger that contributed to the development of our signature aesthetic. With Jamie Haas Hendricks and Jake Jack Hylton, I began Howl Theatre Project in 2014, and we are developing our own body of work with its own aesthetic. I mention these collaborators because, when I use the word 'we' in this chapter, I am referring to them.

Under the auspices of TIMB (in its last days) and Howl (in its first days), I developed and presented the works that constitute the MOTS cycle, which is the studio work that comprises the data for this study. The first MOTS was a prototype, setting the conditions for a way of working that was amenable to methods combining contemporary performance training and ritual traditions. The next three MOTS works were where I tested the methods of spell, charm, and trance, and these works comprise the majority of the data for this study. The last MOTS work is a university theater production that I did not write or direct, and would serve to test the method in other conditions. This cycle of work is the result of years of collaborations with individuals with different approaches and sensibilities, although we shared some common roots.

Roots and Contexts

Because of the common university background for me and my collaborators, our shared sources of inspiration came from knowledge of the European avant-garde, and experimental theater and performance contemporaries in the United States. However, it was Latin American artists, working within surrealism or under its influence, who provided alternate routes toward ways of seeing that made our work unique. These artists included Guatemalan playwright and novelist Miguel Ángel Asturias, Frida Kahlo, and playwright Tomás Espinosa (particularly his play *La noche de los nictalopes*). Wifredo Lam, the Cuban artist who joined the surrealist movement in Paris in 1940 (Egger: 2012), served as a transitional figure. He was working with an animistic dream logic based in Santería, creating evocative images that had double meanings for the viewers with a connection to Afro-Cuban religion. Further, his work was often an act of reappropriation, where 'African art motifs mediated by Cubist and Surrealist "primitivism" are redeployed and combined with references to Afro-Cuban culture' (Barson, 2010: 14). His movement between European avant-garde circles and Latin American roots was an initial source of inspiration as a template for intercultural conversation through art.

The radical theater experiments in New York City are predecessors to experimental forms that have come after, serving as another kind of bridge, this one more temporal than geographical. Sam Shepard's scriptwriting, taking

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

cues from both surrealism and his contemporary, Lanford Wilson, whose dramaturgy would embody the standard for American (United States) realism, broke open the possibilities for multiple perspectives and realities. This was in a milieu when mainstream power structures were being questioned by a growing subculture, and off-off Broadway theater began to privilege the position of the actor over the director or the playwright. This was especially true with the work of the Open Theater and the Living Theatre (Heddon and Milling, 2006: 47). Performers were guided by strong central figures (Joseph Chaikin, Richard Schechner, Julian Beck and Judith Malina), all of whom eschewed an absolutist authoritative position. These central figures were developing performance practices through humanistic rituals, connecting to the cultural moment. These practices characterize some of the experimental theater work in the '50s and '60s in New York, but it was not exclusive to New York. As one example among many, Ken Dewey, writing about his happening experiments in Europe in the early 1960s, expresses a similar approach to practice: 'Performances were composed from available materials, or environments, and according to a particular situation' (1977: 8). Further, this approach is itself a kind of trance. Chaikin's notion of presence is similar to what Dewey was finding, where 'as in a trance there is this thing that you can reach out and touch, that is there and everybody recognizes is there' (Dewey, 1977: 9).

Through studying the performance and theoretical work of Tadeusz Kantor, I found a connection to historical movements as well as another kind of

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

blueprint for radical contemporary practice. This theoretical work, usually in the form of manifestos, from the *Theatre of Death* (Kobialka, 1993: 124) onward, are propositions for allowing the theater space to have its autonomous ritual functions, one that is a living embodiment of memory, of cultural trauma, and a place where the dead speak. Further, Kantor's presence on stage with the performers during the performances signaled an artistic vision that was entirely subjective. The spectator is seeing Kantor's theater through Kantor's memory, framing the notion that subjectivity can point toward the presence of multiple points of view.

Embedded at the University of Iowa in a visual art culture that was at the forefront of new conceptions of the body in performance, Ana Mendieta, exiled from her native Cuba, found the means with which to merge Santería cosmology and symbology into sculptural works she called earth art. Although some critics find her work to be essentialist (Viso, 2004a: 73), this misses the point of the radical subjectivity in her work, as well as the uneasy tension it often establishes between the universal and the particular.

Both Mendieta and Kantor are part of the mis-en-scène they create. Mendieta's body is indelibly burned or otherwise imprinted in many of her more famous works, like a ghost. Kantor is present, sitting to the side of the playing area, serving to remind the spectator that the performance one is seeing is through Kantor's point of view. This radical subjectivity interwoven into their work makes the ritual nature of their work likewise entirely subjective. The viewer, or the spectator, is not an active participant, or witness to an

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

authentic rite, but is instead watching someone else go through an elaborate rite. There is a spiritual dimension here, but it is just out of reach. This creates a tension where the viewer or the spectator or the audience is left to resolve their own subjective experience.

My Generation: Woosters and RATs and Zapatistas

In the early '90s, in New York City, I had my first live experience of the Wooster Group. I had read about the transformational acting of the Open Theater, but, like others of my generation and coming of age under Reagan, I was more cynical than my parents. So when I was exposed to the 'absence of transformation' and a performance style that traded 'illusionism for a more profound ambiguity' (Auslander, 1995a: 307), this ironic performance of one's own iconicity struck me as uncanny. To feed my curiosity, I saw Willem Dafoe perform live, ran into him at one point on the street (it was not quite stalking), and watched Kate Valk perform live and simultaneously from a projection on a television screen. Less than a month before, I had seen a workshop production of Paula Vogel's *Hot 'n' Throbbing* at Circle Repertory Theatre, where I was an intern. This production was presented in rough form in a basement space, through the techniques that Anne Bogart was setting forth and which would emerge as viewpoints.

The viewpoints are points of awareness the performer makes use of while working (Bogart and Landau, 2005: 8). The physical viewpoints are tempo,

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

duration, kinesthetic response, repetition, shape, gesture, architecture, spatial relationship, and topography (Bogart and Landau, 2005: 8–11) and the vocal viewpoints are tempo, duration, repetition, kinesthetic response, shape, gesture, architecture, pitch, dynamic, acceleration and deceleration, timbre, and silence (Bogart and Landau, 2005: 106). I do not use the techniques to the degree my collaborators do, although I use the concept of soft focus (Bogart and Landau, 2005: 32–33) as a means of taking in the whole without concentration on a single exterior point.

Erik Ehn's writings on RAT (Mondello, 2005) in the '90s were gospel to a number of practitioners who called themselves 'alternative'. RAT is an acronym, and it can stand for Regional Alternative Theatre or Raggedy Ass Theatre, depending on whom you ask. Historically, it is a continuation of the sensibilities that led to the creation of off-off-Broadway theater in the middle of the twentieth century, taking the charge to further radicalize the regional theater system in the United States. Although Ehn is linked to RAT from its inception, he denies authority or leadership, taking on an attitude similar to the Diggers in the late '60s in San Francisco. RAT is a loosely affiliated organization based on voluntary membership, where 'you are if you say you are' (Ehn, 1999). Combining the humanistic impulses of experimental theater in the '60s with a postmodern sensibility that was finding its sea legs in the '90s, RAT was an experiment in sharing resources and sensibilities. I was present at the 1999 conference in Iowa City, and this inspired me to write my first theater manifesto for TIMB (Danowski, 2003).

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

One of the most relevant and radical models for my intercultural work is the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, or EZLN. On 1 January, 1994, the EZLN took over the main square of San Cristóbal de las Casas, in Chiapas, Mexico (Marcos, 1999: 47). Thousands of Mayan farmers, wearing traditional indigenous clothing, their faces covered in ski masks, carrying rifles (many of them, it turned out, made out of wood) occupied the small city. San Cristóbal was strategically chosen because of the large presence of expatriates and global tourists who are interested in the ancient Maya. This is not an insignificant demographic. *La Ruta Maya* is a term that refers to a trajectory of popular tourist destinations in Mayan areas, spanning several states in México, Guatemala, and Belize. These are areas of great ecological, archaeological, astronomical, and spiritual interest, because of the Mayan presence; ironically, the presence is often thought to be a thing of the past, despite the millions of living Maya. This is not simply a misconception on the part of the travelers, as many of the tourist destinations, particularly in the great pyramid sites, present the Maya as human artifact, even though the guides themselves might very well be descendants of the ancient Maya.

To announce themselves to the world, the Zapatistas sent out manifestos and statements to the press and the internet, authored by an anonymous figure who called himself El Subcomandante Marcos. '*Mandar obedeciendo*', or 'lead by obeying' (Sursiendo, 2014), would become one of his catchphrases, foregrounding a political strategy where he, as spokesperson for the Zapatistas, is not in charge, but is in fact serving under them. This turned out

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

not to be empty rhetoric. Marcos was a theater student in Mexico City. Inspired by Marxist thought and México's revolutionary history, he and other students went to the highlands in Chiapas in the '80s, with the intention of liberating the Mayan peasants. Instead, they found the Mayans already had their own systems of governance in place, along with ontological and cosmological frameworks that could account for ritual, cultural myth, and the historical and current political situation. Instead of imposing Marxism from without, the revolutionary students spent ten years learning a cosmology from within, and this culminated in the actions in 1994 (Galeano, 2000: 12), a revolution which is still unfolding today. I was in San Cristóbal for five months in 1996, and returned a few times between 1996 and 2003, traveling with Tamara Underiner, who was researching indigenous theater, working with Sna J'tzibajom (Cultura de los Indios Mayas, n.d.) and La FOMMA (Fortaleza de la Mujer Maya, or 'Strength of the Mayan Woman'; Hemispheric Institute, n.d.), two Mayan theater troupes centered in San Cristóbal. Although the Wooster Group's practice is absolutely modern, and the RATs offered ways of thinking and acting locally and globally, the Zapatistas encapsulated a hemispheric sensibility that was intensely immersed in geography and culture, using popular Western perceptions of the 'vanished Indian' to recontextualize contemporary notions of modernity and postmodernity.

Current Contexts

With both TIMB and Howl, I utilized structural approaches borrowed from theater devising techniques, with an aesthetic agenda that places my work within a postdramatic context. *Devising* is a problematic term in the United States, where similar strategies might be labeled 'collaborative creations' (Govan, 2007: 4). Our work does not generally read as devised or collaborative. I compose most of our texts, often direct, and sometimes perform. I do work with a team of artistic directors, however, and our shared approaches fit two primary devising criteria: the work is economically driven (working outside mainstream theater systems), and opposed to an aesthetic approach based in naturalism (Govan, 2007: 5). Our texts are created for a specific group of performers, based on shared and immediate concerns (Govan, 2007: 6). There is a particular relationship to space (Oddey, 1994: 17), where the piece is usually conceived for a specific and intimate location (a living room, a gallery, rarely but sometimes a theater), and an equally organic relationship to technology (Oddey, 1994: 18). Media design is part of the initial conversations for a project's development, and media has played a major role in the work since its inception in 1999.

My aesthetic approach toward the text is in alliance with the postdramatic (Lehmann, 2006), where the dramatic text is no longer the central aspect of a performance. The text is certainly one of the primary elements, but it is

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

sometimes eclipsed by the presence of the actor, the specific intimacies and contexts of the staging, and to the relationship between the live performer and the virtual media. Further, there are emotional and ritual structures which are central aspects of the performance, and these do not translate to written text.

Performance Style

In the work preceding MOTS, we were developing a signature performance style that is based in part on Kantor's ideas of non-acting (Kobialka, 1993: 64), where the performer was an empty slate, a screen for the spectator's gaze. This was developed with a fairly regular and devoted spectator base. As we worked with spectator expectations, the performances would sometime morph into performance of persona, rather than character. This borrowed from the early work of the Wooster Group, where 'persona, distance, audience perception of the performer, the performer's perception of himself — are always part of performance, but are usually sublimated, at least in conventional work, to emphases on character and psychology' (Auslander, 1995a: 310). In this work, 'instead of trying to fill the moment with emotions analogous to the character's (Stanislavsky), the performer is left to explore his own relationship to the task he is carrying out' (Auslander, 1995a: 308). When the performer speaks, it is often in rapid bursts, and movements are carried out with slowness and extreme precision. As in the Wooster Group, 'the possibility of meditateness leads to a kind of catharsis' (Auslander, 1995a: 309). The

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

work of this period was characterized by a conscious shift away from character, and the Monsters work afterward signifies a return to character from within another ontology.

The present performance style is peculiar to postdramatic theater, but not derivative of one particular group. The performance texts serve as a scaffold upon which to create an autonomous theatrical reality. This is through language that is poetic and evocative, rather than discursive. Interior monologue is presented as everyday speech, and there is little to distinguish waking reality from dream realities (Lehmann, 2006: 83). Dramatic form is subverted in order to privilege a structure that is instead spiritual and emotional, and 'synthesis is sacrificed in order to gain, in its place, the density of intensive moments' (Lehmann, 2006: 83). The performance style informs the modes of presentation, but it is through the presentation modes that the influence of Lukumí and Palo ritual becomes visible.

Presentation Modes

The performances are often held in my living room, which also serves as the rehearsal space. There is always a connection between the spectator and the space, with some familiarity with one or more performers involved in the production. The spectators usually have some awareness, then, of our personal lives, and might understand the connections between the events in our lives and the performance worlds we are creating. I do not try to create an illusion of

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

real space. The performance space is abstract rather than representational, with the subjectivity of a dream. The characters inhabit personal spaces, trying to communicate from within various levels of a dream. There are references to a reality that are sometimes threatening, and sometimes a ridiculous construction. This reality is not accessible to the characters for any significant length of time. The playing space, as in Kantor, 'exhibits the temporal structure of memory, repetition and the confrontation with loss and death' (Lehmann, 2006: 71). The plays are structured in scenes and monologues that sometimes seem disconnected, borrowing collage techniques from the Wooster Group (Heddon and Milling, 2006: 196). Like the Wooster Group and Goat Island, there are subtle and overt repetitions of themes, objects, and symbols from performance to performance (the dog, mirrors, the moon). The individual performances can stand on their own, but repeat spectators find connections among the play texts, so that 'the accretion of various texts produces a richness that prompts infinite connections' (Heddon and Milling, 2006: 205).

There are influences from the European and American avant-gardes (here I use the term *American* hemispherically), but the primary distinction of this work is that its primary presentation mode is that of an nkisi being unwrapped and rewrapped. One of the definitions of nkisi is *charm*. The performances are charms. The live performance contains multiple texts—the trance work is a text, media is a text, sometimes there is literal text in the media, the lines of text, and everything else in between the lines—small movements with the muscles of the eye, gestures, grunts, all these are part of the nkisi. The

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

performance is an object that contains all of the parts. The parts are laid out and made visible before the spectator, who is responsible for creating their own version of wholeness. As in the oral traditions that inform the work, words are one part of the text to be decoded, but this is in conjunction with actions and symbols.

The Texts

The performance texts are constructed toward effects that are common to postdramatic work: 'More presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulse than information' (Lehmann, 2006: 85). There is an excess of language, suggesting that instead of trying to communicate something through words, the excess of words is communicating a need to communicate something. The characters often speak in subtext. The usually hidden psychological motivations, impulses, and memories are on the surface. The character lives in a dream or alternate reality. Often the challenge for the performer is to construct a conscious reality for the character, rather than constructing their inner life.

At the beginning of each project, I meet individually and collectively with the performers in order to discuss initial ideas. There is usually no preexisting script (Heddon and Milling, 2006: 3), with the understanding that the performance text will be created for this particular group of performers (Govan,

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

2007: 6). It is not written in solitude, but in communication, and it is presented to the group in stages, with discussion at each stage.

The performance text does determine the beginning and the end of the performance, so it does take a more central position than most devised work (Oddey, 1994: 7–8). In the same vein, the text often serves as the documentation of the performance (Oddey, 1994: 21), although it does not represent the event. At best, it serves as an incomplete translation. The performance texts included in appendix E are to be considered as the remnants, like sheets of music for instruments that have not yet been invented.

For MOTS, these performance texts were performed for the first time, and the performers were aware that the text was created for them. It is possible that the same text might be restaged in other circumstances (which happened with *romeo & juliet/VOID*), in which case the MOTS performances would serve as the originary performance, what ‘remains afterward, as a record of the text set in play’ (Schneider, 2011: 90).

A final distinguishing feature of the text is its function as a spell. When I meet with the performers to discuss our concerns, I am listening for rhythms and repetitions over content, using an ‘evenly suspended attention’ (Freud, 1923: 239) so that my unconscious might come into dialogue with theirs. The play texts are written as a spell for and on the performers. They speak a spell that is constructed for them, like meeting inside a private and favorite recurring dream. Language works in these plays as a means of temporary incantation,

Chapter Three: The Monster Contexts

sometimes holding meaning and sometimes narrating the experience of meaning slipping away.

One of the unexpected outcomes of the studio work, as it progressed with this theoretical writing, is my approach to writing for performance. While practicing performance as a spell, considering the frameworks according to ritual structures, I started to write the texts in order to test the methods. Repetitions of words and sounds could induce a sense of being under a spell, objects could become charms, and the structures of guided meditations that induce trance could also guide the narrative of the performance text. This is one of the reasons I include the performance texts in the appendix E: they become a repository for my thinking, and serve as an artifact. When Lukumí and Palo ritual come into dialogue with performance whose lineage is in Western forms, there are different kinds of knowledge being produced, and these play texts serve as one kind. I discuss these texts in more detail in the next chapter, but having clarified what the studio work is, I move to a discussion of the work according to several registers: ritual, artistic, dramaturgical, psychoanalytical, and digital.

Chapter Four:

The Monsters

This chapter sees the reintroduction of multiple authorial voices. Chapter One, with a focus on ritual, was told primarily through the voice of the Ritual Director, with occasional interruptions from the other voices. Chapter Two focused on performance, with more dialogue throughout. In Chapter Three there was only one voice, focused on my history and contexts. I am using these voices to speak to each other when there are tensions. This chapter, where I write about each of the works, mirrors my experience in the studio, which can be simplified as an experience of multiple tensions. To illustrate these tensions, and work toward resolution, I use polyphony. Polyphony incorporates the multiple voices, reflecting my own way of writing in the studio (text for performance with multiple characters and multiple subjective perspectives), and allows the tension between ritual and performance established in chapters one and two to continue in a conversational tone.

The conceit for this chapter is a theatrical program, presenting information on each of the studio works with brief descriptions for each of the following:

1. Rehearsal Director's notes: basic information, including characters, a plot outline, and a description of the spectators selected for each

Chapter Four: The Monsters

work.

2. Dramaturg's notes: a description of the rehearsal process.
3. Director and/or Writer's notes: particulars of the construction of the text and the directing process, if different from what is described above.
4. Ritual Director's notes: specifics on charm, spell, and trance.
5. Technician of the Sacred's notes: notes on the media.
6. Artistic Director's notes: subjective and poetic impressions from the time of the rehearsal/performance. This section is stylistically different from the others, as it is in the voice of the Artistic Director. It is also an artifact of the autobiographical writing that is part of my studio practice methodology. It serves as a map of metaphor. It also plays a central role in the final research artifact, *The Ghost Lounge*, where it becomes a script for my live narration over the video documentation.

These are the six characters speaking through this thesis, and, in this chapter, they are not speaking in the form of a dialogue or conversation. Through multiple perspectives on each of the five MOTS works, the reader may infer a clearer understanding of the works than if they were presented from a singular authorial voice.

Monsters of the Sea I: *How I Lost Your Mother in the Underworld*

1. Rehearsal Director's Notes

CAST/CHARACTERS:

LIANA O'BOYLE—NARRATOR

JULIO CESAR-SAUCEDO—MARSHALL

JONATHAN HERNANDEZ—LILY

JAMIE HENDRICKS—BARNEY

OSIRIS CUEN—ROBIN/EURYDICE

CHRIS DANOWSKI—TED/ORPHEUS

GRACE DANIELS—PSYCH/DOCTOR VODKA

ASHLEY KERIN MARTINEZ—MEDICINE WOMAN/INTERVIEWER/
WITCHAY WOMAN

DIRECTED AND WRITTEN BY CHRIS DANOWSKI



Image 1. Performing television. Julio-Cesar Saucedo and Jonathan Hernandez as Marshall and Lily.

Performed over two weekends in June 2013, the inaugural production of the MOTS cycle was held in a private living room space in downtown Phoenix. *How I Lost Your Mother in the Underworld* was a mash-up of the Orpheus and Eurydice story and the TV show *How I Met Your Mother*.

Chapter Four: The Monsters

The play takes place in several realms. First, the spectator is watching performers who are enacting a slightly surreal version of the TV show. At certain moments, these characters are watching a TV show, or a film, projected into their playing space. This projected world eventually becomes a dream world, commenting on, and sometimes invading, their own performance space. Occasionally, the confluence of TV world and dream world sends the performers into a state of karaoke-induced trance.

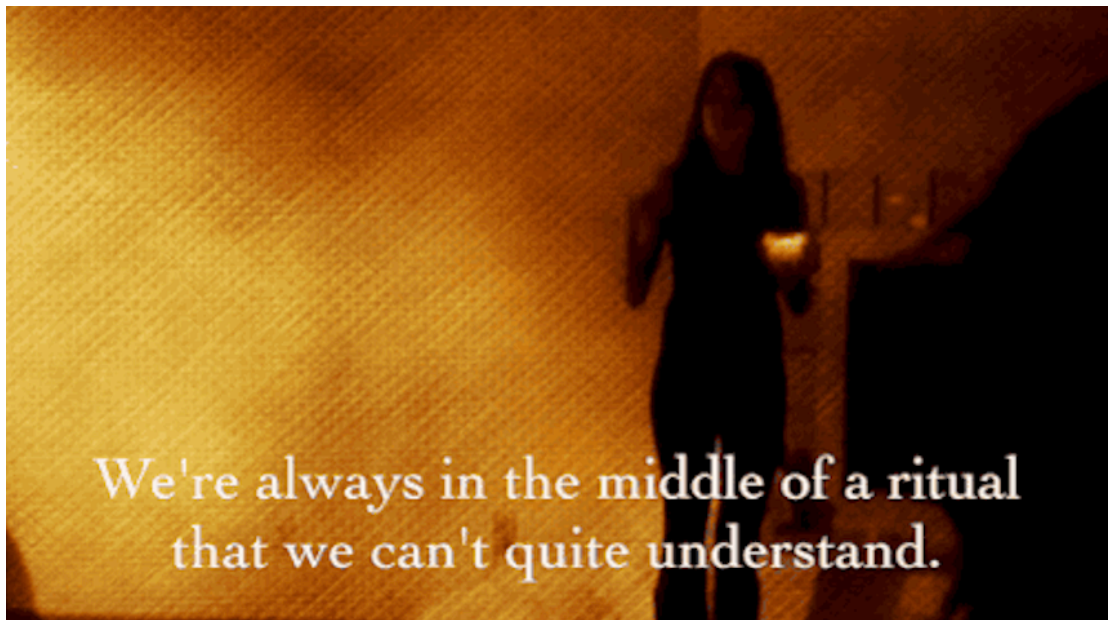


Image 2. Casting the spell. Liana O'Boyle as the Narrator.

There was a conscious experiment with the application of Lacan's orders ('the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real'; Lacan, 1992: 3) as a performance/staging strategy. The TV show *How I Met Your Mother*, as represented by live performance, took the place of the Symbolic order. The realm of myth, represented by the Orpheus and Eurydice story as it unfolded on video, held the place of the Imaginary. The realm of ritual, represented through movement and sound in near-darkness, was the Real. The spectators for this were invited,

Chapter Four: The Monsters

close acquaintances. In part, this was because of the location, being a downtown apartment where public performances would violate city codes. Also, this was to further serve the inherent intimacy in a small, closed setting.

2. Dramaturg's Notes

This work was to be a prototype for the MOTS cycle as well as the testing grounds for the subsequent works that would constitute the research material for the thesis. In terms of research material, there were no formal interviews, but there were debriefings during rehearsals. The methods were discussed but not implemented. The uses of spell, charm, and trance would not be formally introduced until MOTS2. There were some experiments toward the development of physical vocabularies of trance, applying movement to metronome patterns in extended improvisations.

3. Director/Writer's Notes

I became obsessed with *How I Met Your Mother* (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0460649/>), a situation comedy about a group of friends in New York City told through a series of flashbacks. The central love interest is between Ted and Robin, who are in an on-again, off-again relationship throughout the show's nine-year run. I had been obsessed with the story of Orpheus and Eurydice for most of my adult life. The myth speaks to me about obsessive love, art, and the

Chapter Four: The Monsters

relationship between this world and the underworld. Through discussions with the performers, I decided that a mash-up between the TV show and the myth would be fertile ground for a preliminary exploration.

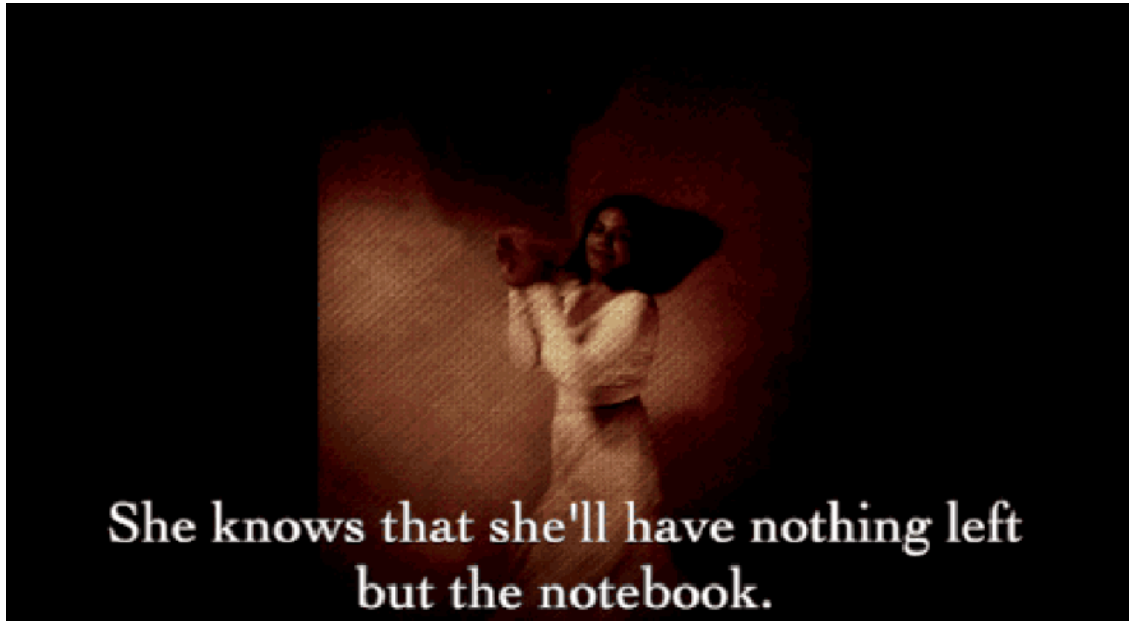


Image 3. Media as nostalgia. Osiris Cuen as Robin/Eurydice.

4. Ritual Director's Notes

In order to begin, I understood that in order to place spells, I would also have to be under one. In the next project, I would be putting the performers under a spell, so I put myself under a spell with this one, so I could know what it felt like. I spoke to Oshun and Yemaya through *obi* (a divination method using coconut), and constructed a charm for myself by following their prescriptions from the divination.

Oshun and Yemaya are divine mothers, watery spirits at home in the river and the ocean. They can take the form of the mermaid. This is why I call this entire cycle *Monsters of the Sea*. This is boundary work (Borgdorff and Schwab,

Chapter Four: The Monsters

2012: 117), and there might be sea monsters at the edge of the world. Mermaids know their way around.

A ghost story:

A week or two into the process, I was meditating downstairs. I heard something moving around downstairs with me, something like chains against a wooden trunk. I got up to investigate, but nothing was there.

The performers came over, and we rehearsed upstairs for a couple of hours, and then we took a break. Three of us were looking at a large scratch on one of the upstairs doors, wondering what happened to make the mark. At that moment, we all heard a sound, like chains against a wooden trunk. I ran downstairs and looked everywhere and could not find a source for the sound.

The following day, one of the performers told us he'd had an interesting night after he left. His significant other had come to my apartment to pick him up, and was waiting in the car outside. This significant other was going to come in, but started seeing ghosts outside, and was too frightened to get out of the car. He saw a ghost walking in the street, then he saw it appear again on the other side of the street, and then he looked into the rearview mirror and saw a face staring back at him. The couple realized that the events had been happening at roughly the same time: that while we were upstairs hearing ghosts, he was in his car outside, seeing ghosts.

Another ghost story: Sunny, my dog, was hit and killed by a car during this work. It's important to mention. Dogs play an important part in this,

especially in the spirit world. Ghosts are the traces of the dead, and there are always going to be more ghosts.



Image 4. Stealing from Godard. Jonathan Hernandez.

5. Technician of the Sacred's Notes

The media for this work took up more of the playing time than in any of the subsequent MOTS works. Using video, I constructed scenes that told a version of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, filmed from Orpheus's vantage point so we never see his face. There were also scenes of mock interviews between me in the persona of the narcissistic artist creating the work, and a woman (Kerin) in the persona of an imaginary and adoring interviewer. There were projections for three karaoke scenes, with song lyrics and images from music videos. Finally, there were several two-person scenes, constructed in the

Chapter Four: The Monsters

style of Godard's *Masculin/Féminin*. Two people talk about love and loss in black and white, simple and pretentious. In order to film these pre-scripted scenes, and make them seem as though they were spontaneous interviews, I used a Godardian approach: two performers stand in front of the camera, and two performers sit behind the camera. The performers off camera read lines out loud, and the performers in front of the camera repeat the lines. The off camera performers are instructed to read without inflection, and the performers on camera are instructed to respond, but mutedly. The repetitions are kept and the off-camera readings are edited out. The performers on camera become like echoes or empty vessels with a limited means of expression.

6. Artistic Director's Notes

When I met her, it turned me inside out, like light was being pulled from shadow, only they could never be separated, and I understood, but couldn't put it into words then, that rebirth is not unusual, but something that happens every day, whenever elementals meet, that rebirth is the rule and not the exception.

Dubek explained, 'So, that feeling you get when you're lost watching waves, or feeling the rhythms of the breath of someone sleeping next to you, that feeling, the things that escape through the cracks that hold reality together...to me, art can never capture this. And bad art thinks it has captured this. And good art tries to capture this and fails. And my favorite, my very favorite, is when art captures that sense of the impossibility of the capture.'

Getting ready to go far away. The dog, spirited, inspired, a spirit dog, grabs broken things, things dotted with blood, and puts them into my pack. 'I don't need these things', I say. 'Haha haha', says the dog, 'when you travel to homelands the first thing you pack are those things of grieving'. 'But they're broken', I say. 'They're not broken, they work', she says, 'they work like a charm'.

That song of the sea that sings to me: you will go into the world and you fall through holes in the world and you will die. And so will everyone you love. You will lose your father and you will be the father or the mother or the lover that someone will lose. And it will happen again and again and again. This makes

Chapter Four: The Monsters

most of you nervous, so you try to get numb or acquire things. But. If all you acquire is attention to your breath. You will start to see and feel the orchestration under it all. And you will come to know the things that mermaids know.



Image 5. Double personas. Jamie Haas Hendricks and Liana O'Boyle.

I showed my daughter pictures of the moon before she could even speak. When she saw it for real, for the first time, she was riding on my shoulders, wiggling like crazy, and she said the word, over and over. Moon. That's how I felt when I first got to New York. This thing that existed in so many versions, it wasn't just a word, and it means something different to everyone, and I get to have it mean something to me. This thing is not a dream, this thing is real, and that's the mystery. We are waking up and falling asleep in that mystery, as if every place on earth is the fruition of a dream our ancestors had for us.

Note to self: release new Afro-Cuban exercise video, Pilates of the Caribbean.

Someone once told you something and it wasn't true but you believed them. You can't believe the living, like you, they are always confused by all the mirrors. But when you remember the dead, you hear things, and when you listen the dead tell us who and where we were, are, and will be.

You slipped through the cracks between one year and the next, feeling as though they couldn't find you when they were filming your academy-award winning scenes. The things that once made you so melancholic now remind you that things are unfinished, but still whole, themes are resolved but still likely to recur, and salt on skin from tears or from sweat is what this life tastes like. Although you may not recognize how gracious this year has been to you, you can't deny that when you move with your breath that you are as graceful as anyone who ever danced on the surface of the world, and your best moments happened off camera.

Chapter Four: The Monsters

Wake up in warm rain, on a day when you are made of clay, just soft enough to be formed into the thing you have been becoming, almost ready to be put to the fire.

The dead came singing, just outside the window by my head, and I could not sleep at all, but I feel like I slept by the sea and there is salt on my skin. We passed through the summer. We made it through the fire. We misplaced parts of ourselves that we didn't want to be. They come singing. You always look so sad in photographs, but here in this moment your eyes are bright and you are free, you escaped capture, and your mouth is a cave, and when you sing we hear the dead and the living echoing against your grateful fiery bones.

There were lots of stars and I tried to follow them all, and I liked the sudden ones and the chaotic ones or the twinkling ones the best, and I was always trying to write my name and our stories on them in some secret place, but when I stopped following anything, I started to notice that they had been writing on me, writing a story on me, and it didn't burn me, but set me on fire, not a sudden fire, nor chaotic, nor twinkling, but a soft and steady white light; wild in the eyes, soft in the heart, we get born to tell each other stories.

Monsters of the Sea II: *romeo&juliet*/VOID

1. Rehearsal Director's Notes

CAST/CHARACTERS:

HEATHER LEE HARPER—SUSAN

CHRIS DANOWSKI—NURSE

LIANA O'BOYLE—JULIET

JOSEPH VON FRECHEN—ROMEO

JAMIE HENDRICKS—ROSLYN

SETH SCOTT—MERCUTIO

DIRECTED AND WRITTEN BY CHRIS DANOWSKI

MEDIA DESIGN BY BOYD BRANCH

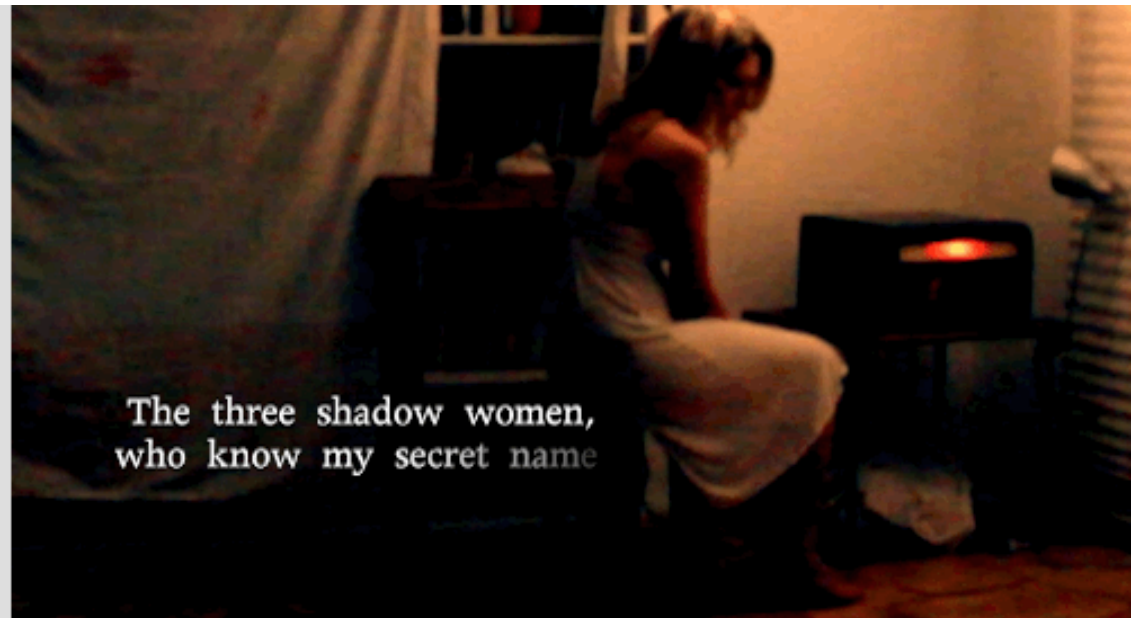


Image 6. Performer as ghost. Heather Lee Harper as Susan.

Performed in my living room in North Central Phoenix in November–December, 2013, this was the work that first implemented and then established the methods for charm, spell, and trance. The performance text was a version of *Romeo and Juliet* set in the underworld, taking place in a ritual present, where the long-dead characters are trapped.

Chapter Four: The Monsters

The text is postdramatic in that it is not driven by events that form a traditional plot. Instead, it is composed of ritual events that point toward a circularity of emotional truths that lead toward spiritual evolution. Susan, the daughter of the Nurse, who died when she was a toddler, is ready to leave this space in the underworld in order to be born in a human body again, and live in linear time on the earth's surface. Through the cyclical pain of the other characters, we see Susan's desires and anxieties. Juliet, having recognized that Romeo is now an empty shell, having been eaten from the inside out by having to perform the persona of the iconic lover, makes a clandestine trip to the surface of the earth to the site where they were buried four hundred years ago. This paves the way for Susan's exit back into the world.

The spectators watch the six characters perform scenes and monologues from their discrete spaces in a small room. In between the scenes, there are video projections of the performers speaking as themselves, talking about love and desire. There are two dance breaks. It opens with a ritual untying, and ends with a ritual tying, and in between the recorded media and the performers' recitation of the text, they carry out ritual actions like spraying rum and cigar, wrapping each other with cloth, and tying themselves to each other.

This was in a private house instead of an apartment. Although the zoning laws do not permit public performance in houses either, the laws are not policed to the same degree. This meant we could invite from a wider spectator base, with private invitations and announcements on social media. These announcements were not widely distributed, however, so that in order to find

Chapter Four: The Monsters

out about the performances, you had to know someone who knew someone.

This maintained a sense of intimacy, where every spectator had to have a close personal connection, if not with a performer, then with another spectator.

2. Dramaturg's Notes

Performers and director met at the house for rehearsals, four times a week.

The evenings began outside, in the backyard. The performers drank coffee, smoked cigarettes, and caught up on each other's lives. After ten or fifteen minutes, the director would interrupt, going over logistical issues, including a plan for that evening's rehearsal. Everyone went inside, and sat in a circle on the floor. The director lit a candle, put on some music, and started the meditation work. After this, there was a short voice and body warm-up. For the next two hours they blocked and worked scenes. This was followed by a short debriefing. The last step of every rehearsal, and after every performance, was when the director sprinkled the performers' heads with cascarilla. This closes the doors on the spaces between worlds. This schedule was consistent for the rehearsal process for the next two MOTS projects as well.

The blocking was simple. There were six distinct spaces in the performance area set for each performer: up right, right center, down right, down left, left center, and up left. Video was projected on the upstage center wall, and the center stage area was used only for ritual moments, notably the two that open and close the performance. The performers were seated in their

Chapter Four: The Monsters

respective playing areas. Each one had a handheld light, and they implemented their own light cues on themselves.



Image 7. Reframing Shakespeare. Seth Scott as Mercutio and Joseph Von Frechen as Romeo. Jamie Haas Hendricks and Heather Lee Harper are holding the light and the frame.

3. Director/Writer's Notes

I began writing the performance text in Berlin in August 2013. My father was dying, and I had just met Heather (who would play Susan), and fell in love with her. I mention this because death and love are the subject matter of the text. My father died in early September 2013, and sometime in the following week or so I finished the first draft. I met with the performers for a read-through, and then we broke for two weeks, when I wrote a revision. During the revision phase, my hard drive crashed, and I lost everything. Heather suggested I write the whole thing again. So I did, in four days, on an iPad mini.

Chapter Four: The Monsters

My fingers are not small, so there were lots of mistakes, including some interesting suggestions from autocorrect. Following a surrealist impulse to accept chance events as part of the art, I incorporated the suggestions into the work. Then the Apple store called, and they told me they had saved the hard drive after all. So now I had two versions. I wove these together, and we started working from this new text.

4. Ritual Director's Notes

Death and love are what rituals are for, so this work began in a magical place. I am forever chasing ghosts, but this work already had a ghost connected to it.

We began formally by initiating the spell together. On the first evening of rehearsals, we met outside as usual, and then gathered inside my altar room. The performers were instructed to whisper something to Oshun, asking her for a favor. Belief does not matter. The action of asking is what opens the door between the material realm and the spirit realm. In fact, belief would get in the way, because then the performers would be there for other reasons than making art together. They are different impulses.

After the spell, we began to work on charms. I put six small circular mirrors (one for each of us) inside my cauldron to Sarabanda (the Palo Monte god of iron). I left these inside the cauldron for four days, charging them with

Chapter Four: The Monsters

cigar smoke and rum. I gave these to the performers as the charms they would carry with them throughout the process.

Mirrors are portals between worlds. These were portals between worlds of



Image 8. The forgotten other. Jamie Haas Hendricks as Roslyn.

the self: the usual sense of self, and an ancestor version of the self. I instructed them that if one wanted to speak with his character outside of rehearsals, he should blow into the mirror to make a cloud of breath. When he wanted to close the conversation, he should wipe the mirror clean. In this way the performers had control over the communication. It was important that they had control, to see me not as someone who could control their fate, but someone who could initiate conversation between them and the spirit world. *Bridge* is a word that is used in new age circles, and it is a suspicious term, but I was a bridge nonetheless. I told them that these were charms for communicating between planes, but that they could also use them as charms in the more

Chapter Four: The Monsters

connotative sense. 'If you have a question, or are trying to solve a problem, you can whisper into them before you go to sleep', I told them, 'then put them under your pillow, and when you wake up, you will have an answer'.

During the first week, Jamie asked the mirror for advice on her job. She was thinking about quitting, even though she did not have any other prospects on the horizon. The answer she received was clear: she was supposed to quit. During rehearsal, she told me about this conversation, and that she had indeed quit her job. I was a bit alarmed. It came as a relief, then, when a few days later she was excited about a new job that seemed to materialize out of nowhere.

Having established the spell and the charm, we moved into the trance. This was induced through a guided meditation, and the one I used for this project went like this:

You are walking on a beach. You find a patch of seaweed. When you move the patch aside, you see that there is a hole to the center of the earth. You go in and start going down. You see a blue light and go toward this light, and you find yourself in a room inside this cave. In the far corner of this room, there is a mirror, and you go to the mirror and look in to see your own reflection. Your reflection, however, is not you, but the character you are portraying, a version of your higher self that already knows everything.

They responded to the spell, charm, and trance in ways that were encouraging, enough so to keep these methods for the subsequent works.

As a side note, the artistic director for the mainstage season at Arizona State University was present at one of the performances, and selected the play text and presented it the following fall. I mention it here because of all the radical differences — a large, public theater space, sophisticated media design, and an international director accomplished in commercial theater. The most

Chapter Four: The Monsters

palpable difference was in the performance style: ASU's production drew from training in the United States's variations of the method, but the director was not versed in Afro-Cuban ritual or iconography. I was curious see how this production would compare to the one in my living room. However, the dramaturg had spent several years of her childhood living in the Kongo region, and she recognized things that were familiar to her about the Kongo, as well as a number of Yoruba references. We discussed this briefly in an early rehearsal, but it was not incorporated into the performance style, although it was reflected in the media design. Spectators who saw both versions generally agreed that the version in the intimate space was more powerful.

5. Technician of the Sacred's Notes

The media was recorded in the first half of the rehearsal process, edited during the next two weeks, and implemented into the rehearsal / performance for the last two weeks. There were twelve short video segments that were built to interrupt the live performance in order to cover transitions, and create a tension between the live performer in character and the mediated performer out of character. They also served as a Brechtian distancing technique to pull the spectators out of an emotional spell that was being cast.

I filmed the performers asking each other questions relating to love and death. I set certain arbitrary parameters (such as no adjectives, no words longer than two syllables) in order to invoke an affect where the conscious mind was

Chapter Four: The Monsters

occupied with a linguistic puzzle, in order to capture anything that might escape through the fissures. I edited these with attention to stutters, Freudian slips, and nervous laughs, highlighting insecurities and flirtations.

6. Artistic Director's Notes

Too much city and there's too much information and not enough knowledge to funnel that information. Go back to the woods and remember what you were taught, go back and learn how to listen to plants and stones. Go back to the woods. There was never a lack of knowledge.

The very last thing my grandfather told my grandmother was the beginning of the love story that I would one day swim in.

You keep going back, you are sure there's something in one of those rooms in one of those cities, something that holds the secret to unlock this, to make time behave, to make this speak in tongues you understand. But the secret was never really secret, just hidden right here. You didn't miss any grand finale, you didn't sleep through the big confession, you didn't lose anything that you really needed. You know how to walk through fire, to slow your heart during the cold, and you know a thing or two about magic. You haven't missed a trick. But if you keep going back looking for the key you might just miss it when it reveals itself in the forward fold of time.

The grief for the ones who came before, for the ones who left the weave of the fabric much too soon, it turns into an open heart that hears the love song of the dead for the living: take care of each other, feed each other in dark times, and make more light.

It seems as though everyone eventually starts to look a little bit like Leonard Cohen.

The shore to the sea: oh what you do to me, I love what you've done what you're doing and what you're going to do, and it doesn't matter if you don't believe me, just look at me, it's written all over me, oh what you do to me.

In the shadow of the moon, I was thinking about the loss of our dogs, the dogs of our fathers, and forgetting that magic happens in the dark or in the light. In the light of the moon, old friends they come back, from under the lip of the sea. I live in the shadow and under the light of the moon. There is always more that's hidden. And I always hear dogs barking, even if I can't see them.

When gorgeous faeries come dancing on your doorstep, asking for a kiss before midnight, open the door.

Chapter Four: The Monsters

The moon is a waterfall in your spine and the sun is lighting up your skin and fingernails and you are made of the stars you see and you are telling the story you are in and there aren't enough days to say all of its versions but you will try anyway because this is love this is love.

On the train, staring without getting caught, trying to find out if anyone here has a clue of what it was like to waltz before the war.

Woke up fevered, from this place: on the banks of where we go back to the place we were before, there is a holding area, everyone waits, and all of the things you lost in your life are brought back to you. The ones who are the most attached to things are the most sentimental, and they cry, not because they missed the things, but because they realize that someone or something was paying attention to their sadness after all. The ones who have lost touch, they cry, too, not because of the things, but because their memories have come back to them, and they missed memory the most. And then there are ones who have stayed unattached, but still managed to stay in the world, all the way in the world, and they do not cry at all, they are not given anything back, because they never lost anything, because they understand that they already have everything in the world they could possibly need.

This year the ending year, brought up old crimes, the oldest crimes, enough to stir up the bones, the oldest bones, from the bottom of the ocean. And those bones, the oldest bones, float to the surface, but can't keep us from drowning they can't, but if we listen to those old bones, the oldest bones, they teach us how to swim.

Grandparents, their children, and the children's children, all watching the waves, watching the bones rolling in the waves, and remembering, remembering, remembering. Now there are monsters, now the children are seeing monsters, and the parents see themselves, and the grandparents just start weeping, weeping, weeping. Those monsters were supposed to be gone by the time the grandchildren came into the world, but here they are, they're right here, they're still right here.

Your heart just wants the broken things, it thinks it can fix the things that are fallen. Your heart wants to be the clock to turn things back to the moment you lost the one you lost a thousand lifetimes before. Your heart is a wild dog that no one will ever really know because you won't let anyone get close enough. Your heart is the rough slouching beast you came here for, not to catch but to tame just long enough so you could ride it.

I was at an intersection and it was flooded and there was nothing to do but wait. I was thinking about how we are programmed for destruction, how we are programmed for creation, and how every once in a while someone shows up to teach us how to change that program. But there was more, there was something else that was written in between my fingerprints. Some promise. Some important promise that I keep forgetting. It was placed in my head when I was born, and I was born in and through love. Only in and through love would I remember it.

Chapter Four: The Monsters

I felt the moon pulling at my teeth and tickling my spine until I trembled and I was sure I trembled all night, but when I woke up I saw that I had not moved an inch. I was traveling all night for sure, riding on the moon like a horse, traveled clear out of my body. And when I went out into the morning, a morning born on a hot breeze, this all looked beautiful, the kind of beauty that happens when something gets made new. And I heard the moon, 'what of this was ever promised as permanent?' And I thought, 'yeah you got me there, moon'. But I thought some more and here is my real answer: If the teeth in my head stick around anywhere near as long as the stones then there is something that bears the traces of every 'I love you' I ever said.



Image 9. Invoking the spirit through spinning. Seth Scott, Liana O'Boyle, Heather Lee Harper, Jamie Haas Hendricks, and Joseph Von Frechen in the closing ritual.

The perfect balance, of light and shadow, the moment when you are lying perfectly still on the water's surface, before it cracks around your silhouette and pulls you under.

It will turn you inside out and make you want to open all the doors and windows and make you want to hide inside a cave outside the city and it will break all of your mirrors and erase all of your memories and it will haunt you in the middle of the night and the middle of the day and it will stop your heart and shatter it but, there will come a day when love finally makes you calm.

Monsters of the Sea III: *endofplay*

1. Rehearsal Director's Notes

CAST/CHARACTERS:

HEATHER LEE HARPER—SHE

STEPHEN KASS—HE

BETH MAY—DOG

SETH SCOTT—DOG

JAMIE HENDRICKS—SHE3PO

SPECIAL APPEARANCE BY LANCE GHARAVI

LIGHTS BY COLLIN MULLIGAN

SET BY SYDNEE PERALTA

DIRECTED BY JAKE JACK HYLTON

WRITTEN BY CHRIS DANOWSKI

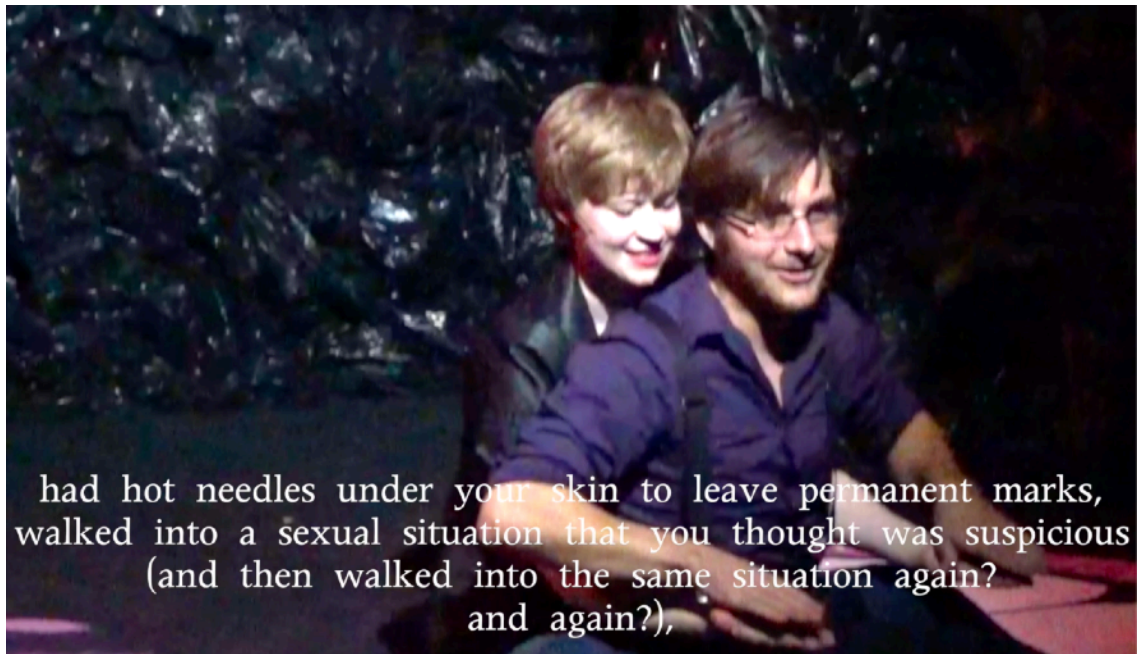


Image 10. Flirtation as language. Jamie Hendricks as SHE3PO and Stephen Kass as HE.

endofplay was performed over two weekends in June 2014 at Space 55, a small, alternative theater space in downtown Phoenix. This was also the inaugural performance of our new theater company, Howl Theatre Project. The script is a surrealistic, psychoanalytic love story. A man, He, is trying to reconstruct a history with a lover who has split in two (She and She3PO). All

Chapter Four: The Monsters

three characters are undergoing therapy with a Dog. Eventually, the Dog falls in love with He. There are two dance breaks and a long surrealist episode performed to Enya music. The themes are memory, representation, and projection. The performance text is characterized by a surplus of language, where seemingly naturalistic scenes are suddenly punctuated with long internal monologues. This is the most consciously psychoanalytical of the MOTS works.

Space 55 seats less than fifty spectators, who are seated on raked platforms. There is a light and sound board typical to small theaters in the United States. Audiences were public, having been personally invited or having gotten word of the performance via local advertising and social media. The reason spectators were not as carefully selected for this was because of the nature of the performance text and directorial style. The performances were not specific to an intimate living room space, and the characterizations, although utilizing the Kanga methods, were more heavily weighted toward psychological associations.

2. Dramaturg's Notes

Rehearsals were held in the writer's house for the first five weeks. Jake Jack Hylton directed. During the last week of rehearsals, the ensemble moved from the living room to the theater space. They were given free access to lights and sound, a backstage area, and some problems. First, the artistic director of

Chapter Four: The Monsters

the theater space had left town on a family emergency. She had not informed the staff that we would be performing in the space. When the ensemble arrived for the first rehearsal, there was another group working in the space, and plenty of confusion, which was worked out over the next three days.

Another problem wouldn't surface until after the show was running. Beth, the performer playing the Dog, was having a severe bipolar episode, which eventually came to a head, and she had to drop out after the first weekend of performances. Seth, who played Mercutio in MOTS2, agreed to step in with two days to learn the blocking and the lines.



Image 11. Confessions of a dog. Beth Mav as DOG.

3. Writer's Notes

The script for *endofplay* took several years, and underwent several evolutions. There was a version that was written before the MOTS cycle began. This was written in fragments on my social media pages, and this led to a draft of a script that was read at Orange Theatre (one of Phoenix's other experimental performance groups) in 2012, which is where I met Jamie for the first time. Jake was also present at the 2012 reading, and we all decided that we wanted to perform the script sometime in the future. When I asked Jake to direct MOTS3, I had not yet decided on thematic concerns from which to construct a performance text, and we agreed that this text would serve as the next MOTS project, but that it would have to be adapted for the group.

In April 2014, the ensemble met and read the script out loud a couple of times, and I wrote several new drafts over the following month. I wrote for both internal logic, and to meet the performers' individual strengths. The original sections, written for social media, contain a peculiar intimacy that is unique to writing that expects to be read with immediacy but without attention to detail. The sections that are extensively rewritten for these performers contain tics and inside jokes that are tailored to them. The play in its entirety is written to be witnessed by a spectator who will feel both like an insider and an outsider, observing a heavily coded world that is almost decipherable.

4. Ritual Director's Notes

The ritual of grieving that formed MOTS2 led me to understand that access to the dead is not unique to ritual, and the line between the living and the dead is still just as thin in other contexts. It is not surprising that the



Image 12. Living through mirror reflections. Heather Lee Harper, Stephen Kass, and Jamie Hendricks.

contexts of performance, already liminal, would allow for the same circumstances where the veil is partially erased. The question at the center of MOTS3 is: if we are not grieving, then why are we talking to the dead?

The answer to this is endless, the answer to this is a well, and we can shout every answer into the well, and the well will absorb it and drown it, and, if we are paying attention, it will answer back. This was not a play about the dead, it was a play about love and projection, the space where we become the

Chapter Four: The Monsters

ghost, we carry the shell of the ghosts we thought we left behind. The dead know about these things, because they have been there, too.

In order to contend with your own ghosts, the people you used to be, you will need substantial charms to carry with you into that particular underworld. For this studio work, I had to innovate and develop the charm. In MOTS2 the charm was the mirror, and for this MOTS3 there would also be mirrors, but something more personal was also being required. I was instructed to construct specific charms for them based on their requests during the spell portion of the ritual. This is how we proceeded.

The performers came as a group into my altar room. They asked Oshun or Yemaya for something specific, something they wanted to attract, or something they wanted to repel. The wishes could be about their work, about their love life, about their spiritual or psychological states, or any combination of these. They kept these wishes secret, between them and the Orisha. They did have to tell me whether the wish was based in attraction or repulsion, and something about the domain they wanted to affect (work, love, home, money, dreams). I divined with obi (coconut) to determine what ingredients would go into their personal charm. I constructed these charms and charged them on the altar for at least five days. The performers were then given the charms with instructions to carry them during the rehearsal process for attraction charms, or instructions for the charm's burning or destruction for repulsion charms.

The Trance for this was a new guided meditation:

You are in your body, and you leave your body. You leave this house, and walk

Chapter Four: The Monsters

outside and find yourself in a strange city in a strange country. You find your way to a busy street, and walk until you come to a doorway to a café. You walk in and take the table in the back. You wait. You look up and see yourself coming in. Your other self sits with you and you stare at each other. (There are variations of what happens next: you leave together, or switch places, or combinations of these things.)

5. Technician of the Sacred's Notes

This project was not media-heavy, but there were five moments when the media interrupted the performance. These were videos of me and my colleague Lance Gharavi in tight close-ups, speaking stage directions into the camera. For this script the stage directions were extensive, taking a cue from Tadeusz Rózewicz (2000), whose stage directions are subversions of the convention of the stage direction itself. Both Lance and I have taught experimental theater at

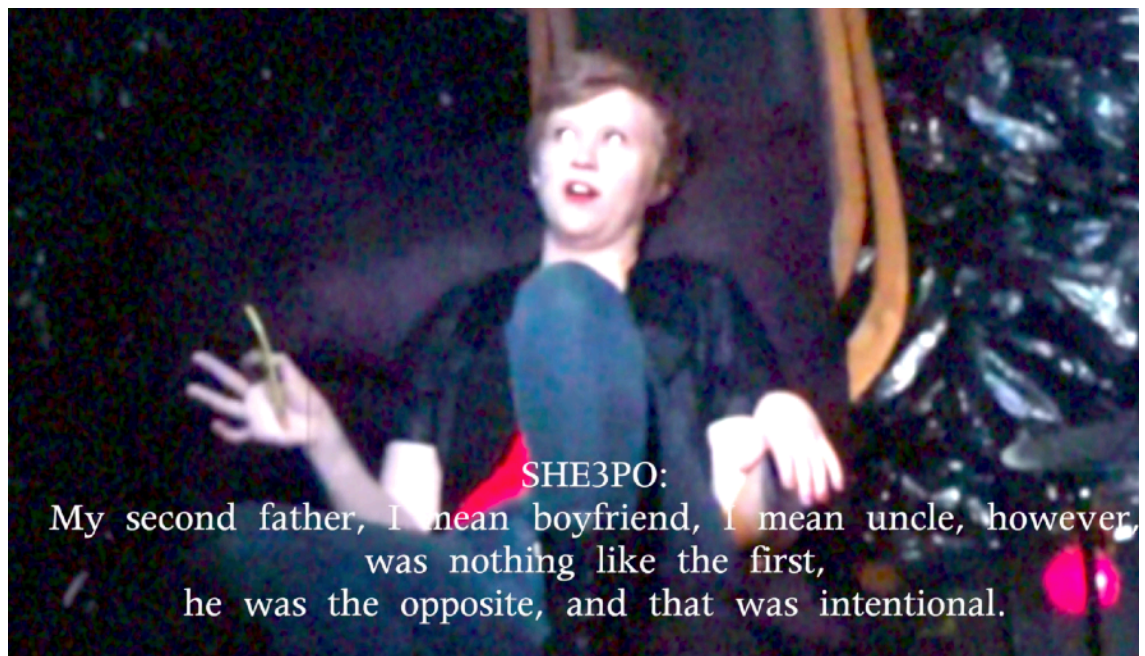


Image 13. Performing the psychotherapeutic. Jamie Haas Hendricks.

Arizona State University, and there are many current or former students that come to these productions, so this was an inside joke for our students. The

Chapter Four: The Monsters

voices (and faces) of authority give impossible stage directions, taking an authorial position that undermines itself.

There is another point of reflection on the media that relates to a failure of video documentation that leads to a fruitful reconsideration. I took a couple of videos of the performance with a stationary camera on a tripod. Someone offered to do a professional video for us for free. This turned out to be, surprisingly, a stationary camera on a tripod. These videos don't contain a capture, but are excellent examples of the failure of capture. In the spirit of reflective practice, the 'thought turns back on itself and on the phenomenon being thought about' (Schön, 1995: 4). I saw this as an opportunity to consider pursuing an aesthetic of performance documentation that alludes to the failure of capture as much as it attempts to re-create the experience. If documentation fails to capture, and fails to evidence this capture, there may be something in the attempt to capture that contains traces of ghosts.

6. Artistic Director's Notes

She had a mirror in her mouth that told me things I wanted to hear, and they were always true but I didn't always believe them, but, like so many children of sirens, I got caught up in the details of weaving spells and missed the moment when she filled with light and turned into a river of fireflies.

1. There is a man in my living room teaching me how to resuscitate someone when their heart stops beating. He explains that the heart is protected by skin and muscle and bone and cartilage, and very hard to get to, it's so deep. He looks through me and says that he sees an extra layer of barbed wire. It is surprising to me. He says that everyone is surprised when they find out they have this. I ask him if it's common, and he tells me that yes, everyone has it, but you only find out about it when someone else gets in there so deep they get cut, and they don't understand why they are bleeding.
2. When he closes his eyes, he pretends that the shower is a rainstorm, because

Chapter Four: The Monsters

it is starting to smell like spring. When he closes his eyes, he sees silhouettes of birds flying everywhere, and he understands that he has been given a blessing that is outside of human language.

3. They are reading several books at once, and still they are surprised that their lives are like complicated novels, that their lives are like small but elegant poems, that their lives are like transcriptions of creation stories from a lost oral tradition. They are surprised that the music of the spheres comes from convergence and dissonance, in patterns as complicated and unknowable as the histories of their hearts.

I wake up too early and the dog is already up, at my computer, with a bowl of popcorn. 'What are you doing?', I ask her. 'Watching the movie of your life, it's so beautiful, especially lately', she says. 'Are you joking, I feel like I'm a hundred years old'. 'Oh, no', she says, 'that's not at all what's happening', she says, 'you bump into so many interesting people, and the main characters are so beautiful when they are waking up, and when you all lose the plot, that's just my favorite thing in the world'.

When winter came back, I was like a shadow, hardly seen, holding things that were as small as moments, like precious stones, in my shivering hands, in love with a world that I would never understand.



Image 14. Reclaiming Narcissus and becoming Oshun. Heather Lee Harper.

The world is a forest and we are made of a swath of shadows and when our hearts are light our hearts are lights and sometimes we don't even recognize each other until we have left each other's sight.

Chapter Four: The Monsters

Persephone is putting another pomegranate into the juicer. 'You get used to the dark', she says, 'but I still wake up to the sound of my own heart thundering in my chest, thinking the sound is you coming home'.

I was looking for the footprints of Tadeusz Kantor on the streets of Kraków and came back with more ghosts than I could hold. They are still falling out of my head whenever I pay attention to blinking. And this, this particular and personal Forefather's Eve is a little bewildering, shadows of 16th-century mystics and the smell of yesterday's rain on sage, and me with impossible wishes to have just one more conversation with my father.

As long as you are able to fall in love with the theme that is your life, every variation is magic when it plays.

Having chased a falling star was not enough, we eventually caught it and ate it, and we glowed from the eyes, and we glowed from our centers, and the price of eating a star was this: our hearts are softer and we are prone to weeping and laughing; we give ourselves away and we are not so very unique; unimaginable beauty does not surprise us, every moment being inside a lunar cycle of constant revelation.

Remember that feeling you had for the first time when you were riding in the car with your parents, going up north for the first time, after a long summer, and you all stopped for gas, and when you got out of the car, the cool air and that smell hit you for the first time? And do you remember when it was Tuesday and it was March and it was this morning and you had that same feeling and it wasn't for the first time except it's always for the first time? And repetitions and reminders of the first time always feel like the first time and maybe that means that this is really always the first time this time this one here is always the first time.

The sound of the storms and then the smell of wet desert and wet pavement, it brings you back, that time, you were sixteen, standing in a parking lot with your friends, cloves and riunite lambrusco, and you were anxious, where would you be in a year from now, you don't know how this works, you were anxious; and you remember now like you remember then, everything is about to change, but, we need to watch out for each other, whoever is we, we are all children of water and we need to watch each other's backs; you spend the first part of this thing trying to navigate a sea that you don't understand, and now, here, you don't know how this works, but you know that you aren't trying to find your way back home, you're aiming toward getting lost in the ocean, and finding home there, or rather here, always here right here.

These two philosophical dogs, sitting on the edge of the sea, watching a storm coming in, and one says, 'This is all one version of reality that we can choose to accept or not accept, and we can decide not to play by the rules of this particular game', and the other one says, 'I think we will both be much more interesting in a few minutes when that version of reality is threatening to drown us'.



Image 15. Meeting self as other. Heather Lee Harper and Jamie Hendricks.

You're back in that city twenty years later. All of the traces of you are hard to find, but they're there. There are other versions of your circles in the cafés and the galleries and waiting on the corners. When you look for familiar things, familiar things start to show traces, but this won't be easy. You have to decide which traces to follow, based on the ghosts that haunt you the most, or the gestures that feel incomplete.

A love song from the dead to the living, and a love song from the living to the dead. Bright as three suns, dark as the other side of the moon. When I think of you my heart beats faster. I'm sitting in the dark, where I can't tell the ghosts from the living, watching my dreams and feeling like I am witnessing something, not the beginning nor the end of the world, but something far outside of that, outside of that space where such things even matter.

Some of us make art to bring light to hidden angles that make sense to us, and we want to be as specific as possible, because someone else might one day say, 'That thing you saw, I've seen it, too, I've been there, too, and I felt the way you felt when you were there', because this is either a dream, or based on a dream, that we had, and if we're living in it, then everything we ever wanted is not so far from reach.

Love is standing perilously close to the edge of the world, love is the breath between the moment and the narration of that moment, love is a tea

Chapter Four: The Monsters

ceremony, a furry thing crawling in through the dog door, a cracked cup and a playlist of 80s fitness hits, love wakes you up or keeps you up or touches your forehead until you sleep, a dream and a grave and a story about you.

A falling star when it's already sunrise, that splits open a rock like a knife made of lightning and gives birth to a snake born whispering two dead languages, or maybe, just maybe, it just gives birth to this, this morning, brunch in some café that has sesame in the name and they only serve herbal tea and soy milk and it would still be all right. Because every time I walk into a room with her I feel a little bit taller, love's definitions keep adding to the story of the first love, the one where the star loved the idea of us so much it just exploded, remember that? I mean I remember that I mean that star that star remembers us uh huh.

Now I remember. Something about the light here, the water so close here, and the almost rain here, that makes the line so thin, the line between my daydream and everything else in the world.

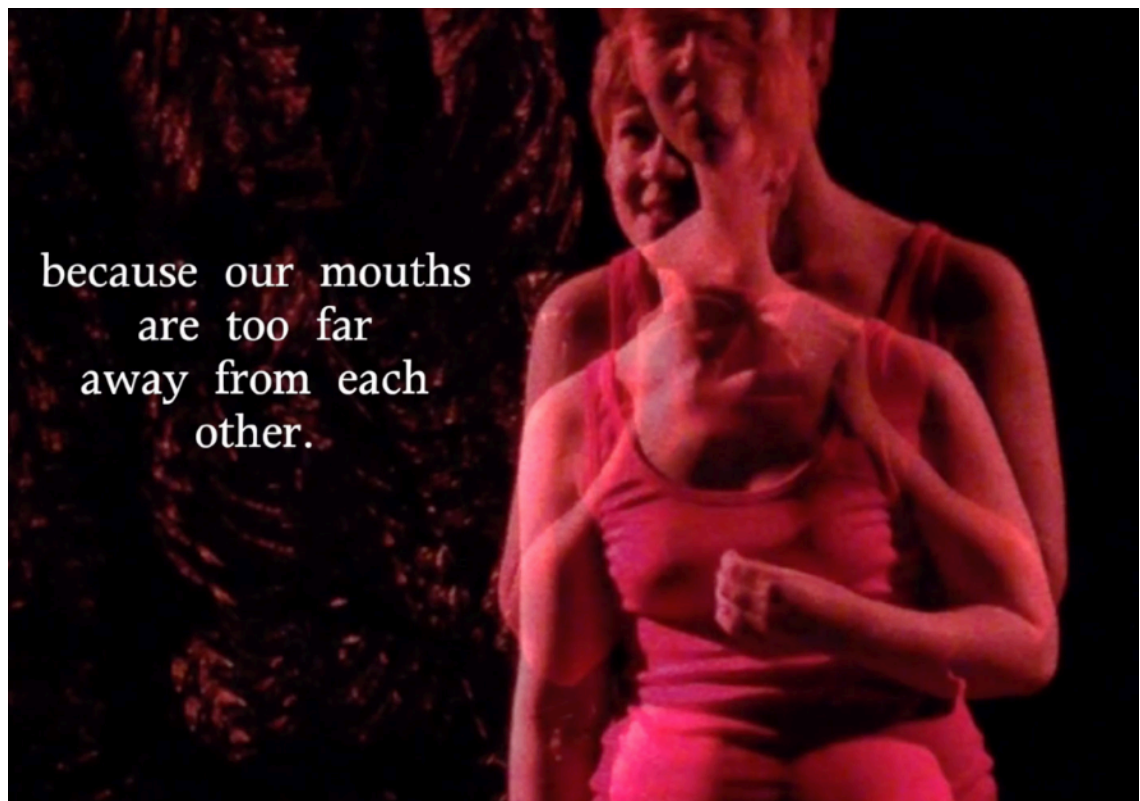


Image 16. Love is a hall of mirrors. Jamie Hendricks.

I was talking to the rain, trying to explain that I understood why it falls, and still had no idea what it was doing to the earth beneath the surface. The heart isn't a mystery, or a poem, just a warrior learning how and when to make a decision. 'The first thing you need to know', it says, 'is that there are some who never leave the forest'.

Brass-belt Doggess tells the Moonstruck Dog, 'Your eyes burst open with salt water because the sea is moving through you, unclench your fists and unwrap

Chapter Four: The Monsters

your lips from your teeth, that music you are pretending not to hear, it's really playing and you're really hearing'.

These gifts you get when you come into the world, the eyes and the teeth and the bones in the hands and the smell of everything that you are, these things that you leave at the door on the way out of the world, and before all of these and after all of these there is hearing and there is breath, and it's no wonder this life is a song this love is a song this dream was and is a song.

Six months after the storm, and the beach was still littered with so many of his things: military jacket, a book on Gandhi, a cane he carved, a bird feeder. I started to loosen my scarf, started to unbutton my coat, started to unclench my fists, and I could see that I was changing. There were feathers sprouting from my chest. The same thing used to happen to him when he was happy.

When she ordered a glass of salt water, I knew this was the beginning of a great adventure.

God is the smile of that beggar, the shaking anxious dog, the father who rocks you to sleep, the mother who puts you together and takes you apart, the breath that connects, the last breath, no breath, the whisper in the desert, and the teeth on the back of the neck that turns you into an object of desire.

Seven trains just crossed tracks in thirty seconds, intersections of relations and geographies and world views, and no one is orchestrating. This was once a story written by Borges, this is a video from the last album by a pop singer no one has heard yet, this is the secret sign that points north on a map that no one uses yet.

When I woke up, with my unique problems waiting for me at the foot of the bed, there was something about the light this morning, and I could see past their shadows, that they were not unique, nor were they problems, and that everything I thought about had been considered a thousand times before. This world is a bus station, lines of thought and feeling are well-traveled, these things have a long line of ancestors, someone has been here before and worked their way through this before, and my stubbornness to be original stopped me from hearing the stories about how this all works, stopped me from seeing connecting threads everywhere, a thousand different colors of thread in thousands of directions everywhere.

Monsters of the Sea IV: *Hotel Athena*

1. Rehearsal Director's Notes

CAST/CHARACTERS:

HEATHER LEE HARPER—ATHENA

BOYD BRANCH—VOICE OF Y

JAMIE HENDRICKS—1 OF 3, intoxication, absinthe head, ecstasy through forgetting

BETH MAY—1 OF 3, rebirth, ecstasy through memory

BETHANNE ABRAMOVICH—1 OF 3, death, ecstasy through death of the ego

LIANA O'BOYLE—A CONFIDANTE

SETH SCOTT—THE BEST FRIEND

STEPHEN KASS—CONCIERGE

DIRECTED BY JAKE JACK HYLTON

WRITTEN BY CHRIS DANOWSKI

Hotel Athena was performed in November 2014, at my house in North Central Phoenix. The spectators follow a Concierge from the front porch, through several rooms inside the house, and outside to the backyard. They watch performers enact scenes and monologues describing a recent breakup involving Athena, a woman on video. The other one in the breakup is never seen. However, the media is designed so that it looks as though we are looking through the other's lens, so that the spectator takes the part of this other. Video and sound recordings project nostalgic scenes from what seems to be a past related to this same breakup. In a climactic scene, the spectators are in the backyard, watching the character Athena perform a dance in the middle of a circle of torches.

Jake directed, I served as Ritual Director, and together we devised an artistic concept. Our intention was to create a performance event that was a

Chapter Four: The Monsters

partly narrative, partly ritual experience. The spectators would feel as though they were in the center of an important rite, only to realize slowly that the rite was for them.

Again, because of the intimate nature of the performance, spectators were invited, or on a friend-of-a-friend basis.



Image 17. Dancing the moon. Heather Lee Harper as Athena.

2. Dramaturg's Notes

The organization for this piece was the most complex of all the MOTS projects, being an orchestration of five disparate worlds, with the performers making up four of the worlds, and the media composing the fifth. The performers were divided into four groups. For the first four weeks, Jake worked

Chapter Four: The Monsters

with one group per evening. For the final three weeks, everyone came together to work out the choreography of what would become the final performance.

This rehearsal arrangement had two remarkable effects. There was more focus and attention on the individual performer than in the previous work. There was also less cohesion as an ensemble. This was part of the aesthetic, so that the lack of connection was a part of the overall ambience of the performance. The performers would expect to have an experience similar to what the spectator would experience, where at first he would feel lost in an unsolvable puzzle, one that only hinted at a coming together at the very last moment.

This project saw the happy return of Beth, and the addition of Bethanne. The other performers were returning from previous work on MOTS projects.

3. Writer's Notes

I was having recurring dreams at the time I was writing this. They stopped for a while, then came back again, and stopped again. In these recurring dreams, I am in the middle of a breakup, in circumstances that I cannot access. In these dreams I have just moved to an unnamed city in Europe. Always when I wake up, I have the sense of having been to a cocktail party for the living and the dead.

With the exception of Heather and, to a lesser degree, Steve, the performers have the same names as the characters. The characters were written



Image 18. Beginning the fire dance. Heather Harper as Athena and Steve Kass as the Concierge.

expressly for this particular group of performers, with this particular site in mind. Initially, we had some discussions about recurring dreams and feelings of loss, and that material became the figure of Athena. In this way, the performance text was constructed like a spell, something that captures all of our losses as a group, and then tries to seduce us collectively into making something together.

4. Ritual Director's Notes

The spell was cast and the charms were constructed as usual. It is helpful, ritually, to be at a point where something is 'as usual', because ritual depends on repetition. The dead, who are used to coming back again, coming back

Chapter Four: The Monsters

around again, understand repetition as haunting, and sometimes it's the living who are haunting the dead. With the charms this time around, I noticed that there were different kinds of requests, that there were more performers asking for things to be removed. This meant that more of the charms had to be burned after they were charged, instead of carried. The trance felt different. We were working in much smaller groups (and, in the cases of Steve and Heather, in groups of one), with the exceptions of the beginning and end of the process, when we were all together.

The guided meditation was like this:

You are floating in space, golden light surrounding you, and you get heavy, and find yourself floating down to touch the ground. You're in the middle of the desert, mountains around you. There is an animal near you, one that keeps you well protected. There is also an ancestor close to you, one who will guide you through your becoming the character; in fact, you are being taken over by this ancestor. (Take spirit animal and/or other with you when you return to the rehearsal room, with variations.)

For this meditation, I went to Carlos Castaneda (1974) and Michael Harner (1990), whose works are well known to this part of the world, and whose structures of the shamanic journey are epistemic, having references in pop culture. This was a larger group of performers this time, and it seemed prudent to build the meditation according to images and structures that were already familiar, even if they might be a little oversaturated.

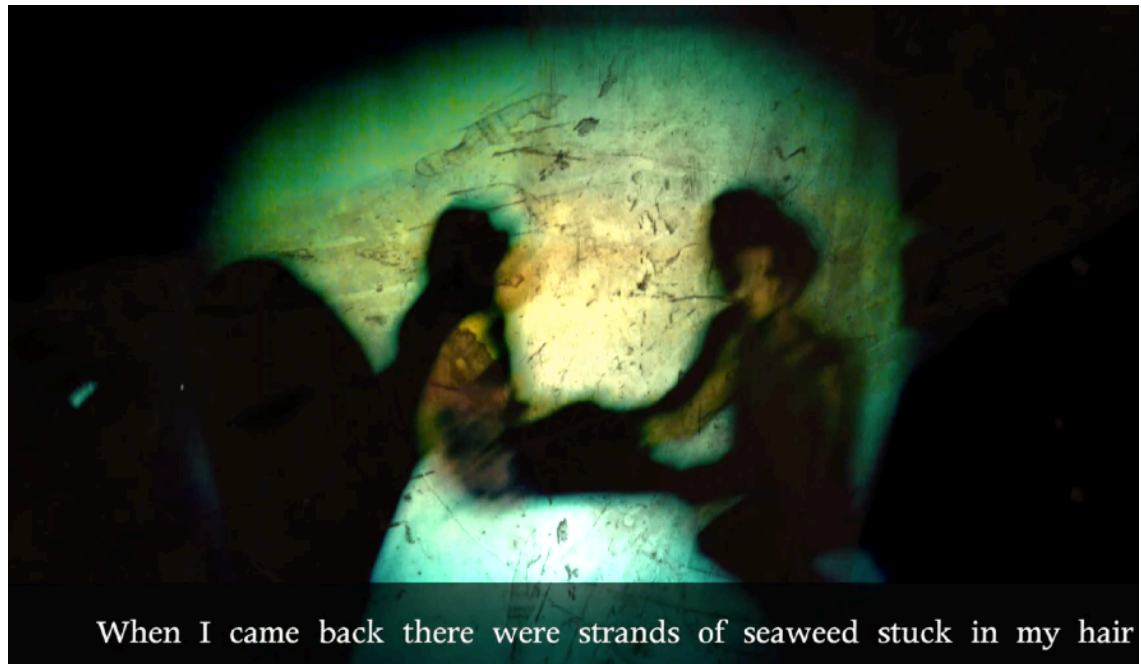


Image 19. Immersion into media. Liana O'Boyle and Seth Scott.

5. Technician of the Sacred's Notes

In the front room, there was a sheet hung from the center of the playing area, over which we projected video. The videos were composed of montages of the performers playing in character, doing repetitive actions. The images were manipulated to make them look old. The look of the videos was toward a manufactured nostalgia, rather than trying to suggest an illusion of old film. We played recorded narration over the montage, speaking about being lost in a foreign city, and written to suggest the narration from a poststructuralist novel. At the beginning of the performance, there was a scene with Athena, announcing the breakup, which was the only instance where the sound and the image matched. In the back room, there was a video of montage without narration, which played continuously, to suggest a constant ghosting in that

Chapter Four: The Monsters

space. There were also voice-overs disconnected from video image. The videos in the different spaces were to suggest different kinds of memory, and to create a space that was palpably haunted by memory.

We experimented with invented nostalgia. There was video repetition of Heather doing a rooftop dance under a full moon. The turning point in the performance, as mentioned, was when she did this dance live in the backyard, in a circle of torches. This was to create a sense of invented memory, an iconic moment of a performative event that has disappeared into ephemerality, to give a sense of the disjunctions between time and space that are characteristic of trance states. Heather's dance video was filmed very late, a week before the opening, because we needed it to be on a full moon. This video would be the one that would be presented as the little object of nostalgia for the central (and unseen) character. Interestingly, it also meant that Heather had more time with the character Athena before filming than the other performers had with their personae. When she was captured on film, it was after learning how to inhabit that persona. By contrast, when Beth, Bethanne, and Jamie were captured, it was at the beginning of the rehearsal process, before they had an idea of who and what they were inhabiting. There are ghosts that I am chasing in the media, and ghosts that I am chasing in the documentation, and when their traces start to appear, I start to see myself for the first time.

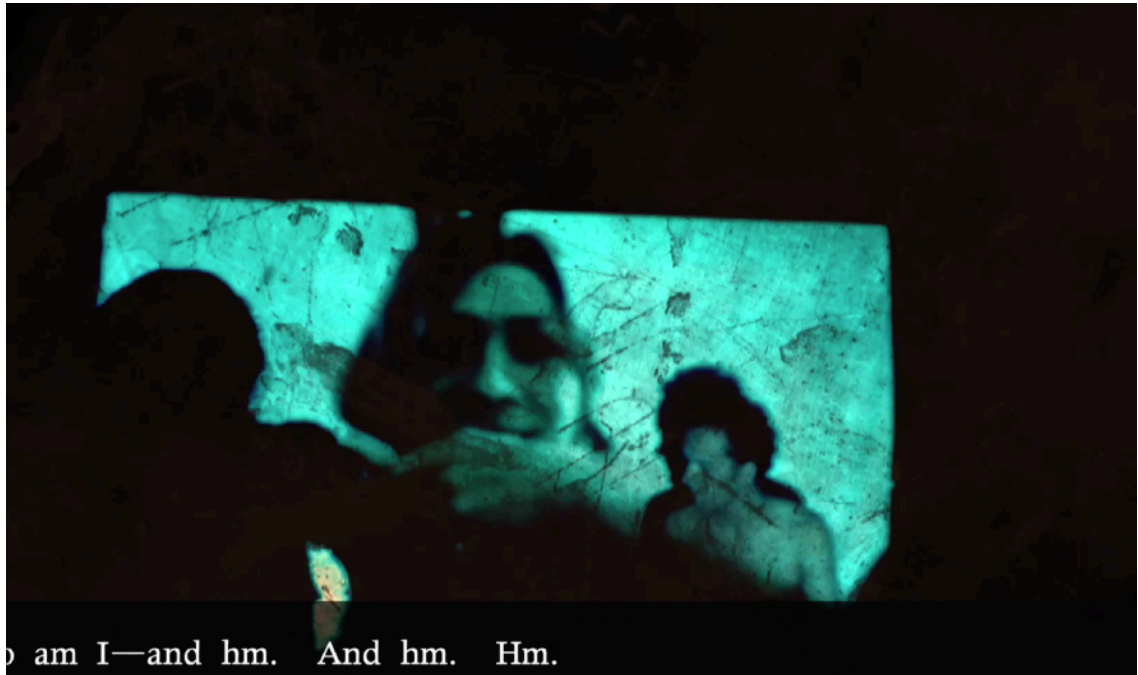


Image 20. Media writing on the live (and vice versa) Liana O'Boyle (barely visible) and Seth Scott (Heather Lee Harper in projection).

6. Artistic Director's Notes

The ghosts of winter come turning the desert back to sea, with all the kinds of mermaids, little goth girls and banshees included, angels of grief and hunger all of them. Death runs in our bloodlines, and every death wakes up the old dead, who tell the living, There is not a single one of you who is not made up of drops of every single one of us.

She lifts the lip of the river like it's a sheet, and I can see so many bones. I had no idea, so many bones. You only see this at certain times of year, and this time is about to close. Already there are more waves coming, they sound like music, and she can't hold the sheet much longer. 'OK', I say, 'bring the music up, I've seen enough, let the music swell, let the music swell'.

Everyone has a bird or two in their chest, but almost everyone is afraid of flying. You'd have to give up seeing what you want to see and what you saw in trade for seeing what is right in front of you. You'd have to give up trying to be who you think they want you to be. You'd have to give up remembering only the things that happened to you in exchange for remembering what happened to all of us. You'd have to exchange your yesses and nos for perhaps. You'd have to give up all the things that you no longer need.

When he looks at her, he is lost in blue, and is inside the storm at high tide, and as safe as a dog under a bed on a night of fireworks. 'I haven't thought about

Chapter Four: The Monsters

the Holy Grail since I was 17 years old', he says, 'since I stopped praying to things I couldn't see'.

I want to be known as the Roberto Benigni of the biker community.

I am cleaning the table next to where dad sleeps. There are a few teeth, old skin, and some feathers. 'Dad', I say, 'I totally forgot that you knew how to do that'. He is starting to look over his shoulder, ready to leap. He says, 'We have different gods, but they know a lot of the same secrets'.

There was that father's day, where all the fathers, living and dead, got together to figure out which fears were really theirs, and which ones were inherited from another time, from other fathers, and other gods. And they found that none of those fears really belonged to them anymore. And they stopped arming themselves against enemies that existed only in their heads, and they stopped teaching their children to make themselves appear larger than they really were, and they stopped talking to the gods they didn't believe in. When they stopped talking, they started to hear things, things from the water, stories about what happens to children who are not afraid, and in this way, the fathers were remembered, put back together as something we all forgot they were, something extraordinary but forgotten, woven into their fabric from the very beginning.



Image 21. Last moments of Athena. Heather Lee Harper.

Even though she turns to salt as soon as he lifts his head from the pillow, he still talks to her, he hears her and she hears him, so he says to the ground beneath his feet, Yes, you're right, the air doesn't fall in love with the earth, they were always in love, there never was any falling, it was always like that and will always be just like that.

Monsters of the Sea V: *Our Kiki: A Gay Farce*

1. Rehearsal Director's Notes

CAST/CHARACTERS:
ZACH RAGATZ—PHIL
SHANNON PHELPS—MOLLY ROMAN
KEVIN WATHEY—MATT
EVAN CARSON—GEORGE
NIKKO THOMAS—CHARLIE
ADAM MENDEZ, JR.—ANDRES GUZMAN
WRITTEN BY SETH TUCKER
DIRECTED BY JAKE JACK HYLTON

Our Kiki, a two-act comedy, was performed in April 2015 at the Lyceum Theatre on the campus of Arizona State University. A straight woman and a gay man share an apartment, and their significant others are on their way over for a meal. Meanwhile, an immigration officer stops by unannounced, to conduct an investigation over a green card application. The action that follows is typical of farce, with cases of mistaken identity, missed connections, and reversals, all framed around themes of sexual identity. Audiences were invited through public advertising and social media, as well as season subscribers at the university.

2. Dramaturg's Notes

This show was entirely different from the rest of the studio works, and served as a test case. The Kanga method (discussed at length in Chapters Five and Six) was put to the test, under the rehearsal circumstances in which it

Chapter Four: The Monsters

would most likely be replicated (for a traditional theater space with a six-week rehearsal process). The play is a more mainstream work, a farce in the tradition of the well-made play. The Ritual Director was largely absent in the rehearsal room. Jake and the Ritual Director met before the production started, to discuss how the method could work in other settings, and what kinds of structures would have to be in place so that this new group of performers would have an experience that was valuable, educational, and safe. Jake is not an initiate in Afro-Cuban tradition, and the actors in this production had no prior experience in the MOTS cycle. Another primary distinguishing feature of this work is that the script was preexisting, and not devised for this group of performers.

3. Director of the Psyche's Notes

I was neither director nor playwright, so any notes would be tangential to the research.

4. Ritual Director's Notes

I am excited to consider what happens when the contextual frameworks are removed, and the ghosts are moving through spaces without an expert there to identify them. My role has been to identify these things in rehearsal contexts, but I am not necessary for ghosts to exist. They have done fine without me for a long time.

Chapter Four: The Monsters

Jake and I met several times and had long discussions before this began. I provided Jake with the Aide-Mémoire (included at the end of Chapter Five). I was also available during the rehearsals, if he needed me, but I was not called upon often. Jake was their guide, serving as both director and ritual director.

For the spell part of the process, Jake talked to the performers about Oshun and her history and functions within West African cosmologies. He instructed the performers to take a couple of days to think about something that they wanted, something that they could ask for. When they met next, he took them to a fountain on campus (Oshun is the owner of all fresh water), and each performer threw pennies into the fountain and made a wish.

For the charm, he gave the performers small mirrors, and instructed them on how to use the mirrors to access their characters, much as we had done in MOTS2. The most challenging consideration for this was whether or not the mirrors would need to be charged. Previously, I had prepared the mirrors with rum and cigar smoke, and left them on my *prenda* to Sarabanda, for a prescribed number of days. This time, we decided not to charge them, because that would mean the mirrors were not manipulated by a priest. This was important for testing the methodology for non-initiates.

For the trance, he guided them in meditation, using the same scenario from MOTS3, where they meet their Other, or Double, in a café.

5. Technician of the Sacred's Notes

In terms of media for the inside of the performance, that is irrelevant to my research, because this was a university production with its own media team. I did, however, record interviews with the performers when it was over. I edited this material with the same pursuit as previously, looking for ghosts, and I was surprised there were so many. This is evident in the documentation and transcripts.

6. Artistic Director's Notes

If you think there is magic in everything, you can choose to pay attention to something that might seem dull or lost or resigned, until it starts to sing, and when it sings, you may find you have no way of repeating the song, and you might find you have to make up another way of echoing, and when you echo, you might see that what you are making is very much like if not exactly art.

There is a terrible wind that won't stop, and we can't pretend that this is not history writing on our very bones. For every life stopped short, there is a frantic and furious love that is released into the world, that contains all the unfulfilled tenderness of the years that were supposed to be. Outrage is the response to the call of those love songs from the dead. We can't pretend our children didn't see this, but we have to act so that their children don't.

It is in the body, the secret, the mystery, is in the body, and the answer to the question, it's in the body, and I could try to speak it, but when I do, it is too late, it is like singing about something that already happened, or trying to describe someone everyone already knows.

I love waiting to go into a dark theater. Something is about to happen. Something extraordinary is about to happen. And it will never happen exactly this way ever again.

The world speaks in code, and all translations are incomplete, like something out of a Fargosonini film. When we stumble upon something close, we start to glow from behind the eyes, but we never recognize it in ourselves. We do see it

Chapter Four: The Monsters

in each other, however, and it's like looking inside is finding space to see outside. Learning how to see.

Untying and Retying the Kanga Line: On Methodology and Method in Performance Practice

In the first chapter, I framed this study within ontological contexts associated with the Afro-Cuban systems of Lukumí and Palo Monte, as practiced in the United States. In the second chapter, I framed an ontology of performance as it is related to my participants' performer training. I then discussed how I drew from Afro-Cuban ontology and cosmology to develop a ritual approach to performance that might speak to other ontological contexts. This necessitated a discussion of the issues relevant to cross-cultural work in general, as well as the issues relevant to this specific study. In Chapter Three I elaborated on the artistic, geographical, and cultural contexts that inform my studio work, past and present. In this chapter, I discussed the specifics of the five studio works through six disparate voices, to illustrate the threads and tensions that run through the relationships between art practice and research. Through the six voices in tension, I am also dramatizing the phenomenological experience of the tensions particular to my project. In Chapter Five, when I discuss the results of the data collected from the studio work, I will discuss my phenomenological research methodology. Before that, I will elaborate on my performance methodology.

The process for putting performers into a state of trance, through the use of spells and charms from Afro-Cuban ritual, is one that was formalized through the MOTS works in studio practice, which I am calling Kanga. Kanga, translated

Chapter Four: The Monsters

as 'magical tying' in Alpizar (2014: 276), or 'knotting' in Martínez-Ruiz (2014:

168), is a Bantu word that implies something greater than the sum of its parts:

For me, Kanga means 'to code something', and by *code*, I mean, to attribute a meaning or power to something that could be, that, that could be nothing, that could be an object, that could be a, so it's creating a, investing magical power into something...And by that I mean, not, not only a way of, uh, protecting yourself, but also, uh, decoding your own coding, like understanding what it is that you are doing, and and being very conscious of it. (Costa McElroy, 24 December 2014)

In Kongo cosmology (where the Cuban Palo Monte has roots), the actions of tying and untying, coding and decoding, are embedded in the elemental principles of containing and releasing power (Fu-Kiau, 1991: 113). The verbs apply to everyday actions, including the making of charms. Following Robert Farris Thompson, a charm, like a *prenda*, is the 'entire world in miniature' (Lydia Cabrera in Thompson, 1984: 123), and so the actions of tying and untying have a larger significance, implying a microcosmic-macrocosmic relationship. As Thompson describes it: 'When the *nganga* trembles with the spirit before a *simbi* pool or an *nkisi* bundle, he becomes the altar' (1993: 48). The priest becomes the thing he is worshipping. The divine is literally in the body, in the writing on the body. Just as Mendieta consecrated her body with chicken blood and turned herself into the sacred object (Viso, 2004a: 64), performance is not the ritual itself, but through careful and knowledgeable manipulations of ritual iconography, it can suggest ritual to a degree that the spectators sense a certain presence, and ghosts draw near.

Kanga as a name not only contains rich metaphorical potential, it signifies a capture that is always only temporary. In practical terms, it centers and

Chapter Four: The Monsters

privileges the performer's physical, spiritual, and social being. The object that is being tied and untied, coded and decoded is not a thing, but a moment. It is the threshold moment when the actor becomes the vessel for the character (like the horse and the rider in Vodou terminology) (Glassman, 2000: 24). In the space of the live performance, from the moment the lights go down to the moment the performers leave the stage, there are points when the threshold reveals itself, when a performer is becoming other. This is a methodology where the impetus is not to capture a feather of proof, the moment of transformation caught by instruments. Instead of devising methods of empirical capture, Kanga marks the attempts to capture, and pays attention to the temporality of this same capture, while focusing on the space of emergence. 'The artist is always balanced between the secrets and the critics' (Viera and Morris, 1996: 185). Kanga writes and speaks from the space of the performer, balanced between acting technique and spirit possession. It is also a strategic positioning, identifying my approach as coming from a particular perspective, and one that is, moreover, explicitly under the influence of a spell. In other words, I am writing from inside the thing that I am also studying, so there is no pretense to objectivity. Under these guises, I am affirming the relevance of a way of knowing and being, in a similar manner to how Karen Barad (2007), Tim Ingold (2011), and Paul Feyerabend (1989), among others, are affirming ontological and epistemological approaches outside a subject-object binary. This is not a new way of knowing and being; it is very old.

Chapter Four: The Monsters

Ultimately I am working from an ontological perspective that is both inside and outside at once, where Afro-Cuban cosmology meets Western performance tradition, and this tension created Kanga, which is both methodology and method. As a methodology, it is an original strategy for moving from an ontology of performance into an ontology of ritual. This is composed of stages. The seven stages of the Kanga method are: untying, conceiving, gathering, channeling, consulting, sweeping, and tying. The reader is referred to Appendix D for further elaboration of these steps, in a document composed of fictional and actual field notes that I call *The Sorcerer's Notebook*, for a more thorough elucidation of my thinking on this methodology. Kanga is also shorthand for spell, charm, and trance, referring to the three methods I have developed within the methodology. These are the three essential tools that I worked with in the studio. When I refer to this, this work with these tools, in the following chapters, I use the term *Kanga method* to clarify its use, and also to carry the traces of the method that performers learn in their university training. Kanga is an original methodology that emerged through the studio practice, and is encapsulated in the Aide-Mémoire that ends the next chapter.

Chapter Five:

The Archive in Trance-Lation

The central concern of this chapter is to present the findings collected from performer and practitioner interviews. Before I present these findings, I discuss methodology, explaining how a phenomenological approach served to elicit the articulations of the performers' subjective and intimate experiences. Next I present the findings, grouping the participants' responses into categories: ancestors, seeing things, hearing things, mirror, trance, and character. From this I draw on what is common in their experiences in order to construct a description of performing under the influence of the Kanga method. With this information, I return, finally, to my research questions. From here I propose a model for performer training based on my findings.

Notes on Methodology and Research Design

In Chapter Two, I started to articulate a phenomenology of character, looking at Blau, Phelan, and States among others, with an aim toward a phenomenology of character as approached through the Kanga method. This is the second step toward this articulation, where I discuss my findings using a phenomenological approach. There is a final step in the following chapter,

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

where I consider the phenomenology of character in terms of haunting.

Phenomenology is the study of consciousness, the structures of consciousness, or, according to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the study of essences, including consciousness and perception (1966: vii). Although it is problematic to use a Western philosophical tradition in order to explain phenomena endemic to other traditions, I am aiming toward a model that is accessible to those training in Western performance contexts. A phenomenological approach is a way for outsiders to begin to understand fundamentally different ontologies through embodied experience. When I work with performers, there is some theoretical discussion, and because it is their background and training, I often refer to Western frameworks. However, when I start to move from the theoretical to the practical, there comes a point where Western frameworks have to be left at the door. But I am writing in a Western academic tradition, and this signifies that the present problem is with translation.

Addressing this problem led to two results. One of these is the discussion of findings I offer in this chapter, using a phenomenological approach. This approach offers a platform for the participants to reveal their 'lived experience of a concept or a phenomenon' (Creswell, 2013: 76). In this case, the 'lived experience' refers specifically to the spell, charm, and trance (the basic elements of the Kanga method). This experience will be understood through the performers' and ritual practitioners' descriptions of their own states of consciousness and perceptions. The second result of addressing the problem of translation between ontologies is the final artwork, *The Ghost Lounge*. This

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

chapter provides the reader with an intellectual understanding of the nature of the states of consciousness the Kanga method produces, and *The Ghost Lounge* provides a version of the embodied experience, or at the very least points the spectator toward another ontological reality. That artwork is constructed from findings that emerged in rehearsal and performance footage, and autobiographical writing. This chapter is based on findings that emerged through interviews with performers and ritual practitioners.

In the interviews, the performers are not trying to speak objectively, but trying to articulate the experience of being inside a particular world. It is a difficult task to discern whether or not someone has actually entered into an ontology or a cosmology (and I would be dubious of anyone who professes to have the ability to validate or invalidate such claims); but, on the issue of phenomenological experience, this is a different matter. If a participant claims to have had an experience, I believe her. With consciousness, the subjective perception of the experience is reality. As with Phelan's quote, where 'an imagined history and a history of a real ocular experience have similarly weighted consequences for the psychic subject' (1993: 4), what the performer consciously experiences registers as reality whether it is in a waking state, or a dream, or in a trance. These are worlds in themselves. Moreover, the rules of these worlds are based in a co-constitution of knowledge. This world, the charmed world, is, in Husserl's term, noetic, where 'the intensive mental process is consciousness of something...and we can therefore inquire into what

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

is to be declared as a matter of essential necessity about the side of this “of something” (Husserl, 1983: 213).

The performers’ reported experiences of being under a spell, under the influence of a charm, or being in a trance reveal something about being-in-the-world, like Heidegger’s *dasein*, engaging with the world as neither subject nor object (Heidegger, 1962: 27), even if that world is not the same material one where I am writing and you are reading right now. The performers have seen something, literally and metaphorically, and their words are descriptions of what they have seen, and, as Merleau-Ponty says, ‘We are nothing but a view of the world’ (1966: 406). Having been through the experience of Kanga, they also have authority over their experience:

My body is made of the same flesh as the world (it is a perceived), and...this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world reflects it, encroaches upon it and it encroaches upon the world. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 248)

Such an approach not only gives authority to the centrality of the performer’s experience, with the locus of knowledge in the performer’s body, it also allows for a more porous experience between the body and the world.

In the application of these principles to the interviews, I consider the performer’s words as autobiographical maps. These may be maps to a world that is already well known to certain ritual cultures, or worlds that are entirely subjective to each performer, or they may be the world that all human beings occupy. These are interesting questions, but I put analytical weight on the phenomenological notion that the individual performer is the only subject capable of expressing what this world is like for her. I chose the interview as the

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

means of gathering this information, because it is in interviews where 'the phenomenological approach is grounded in and begins with the lived-experience as told by the person concentrating on the experience' (Nelson, 1989: 224). In order to make these interviews successful, to make it possible for the performers and practitioners to give me the most revealing information, I experimented with interview techniques which resolved around a politics of evocation rather than capture (Vannini, 2014: 232): playing with the authority of the camera, letting them film each other, and having them speak to the camera privately (Bates, 2014a: 10). I continually moved toward a more casual interview style, through a technique called 'spinstorying'. The interviewee can open up the interview by participating in it, sharing experiences, becoming less formal. This 'minimizes the perceived authority of the interviewer, and promotes an intersubjective, conversational style to the situation' (Nelson, 1989: 228).

I collected the interview footage over the course of the five studio works, and transcribed them all at once, paying attention to stutters, keeping the 'uh's', and attempting to keep their particular speech patterns intact and evident in the transcription (the full transcriptions of the performer and practitioner interviews are in Appendices A and B, and the interview questions in Appendix C). Next, I looked for places where subjects overlapped, in repetition of words or description or feeling. I then divided the descriptions into themes, or categories. For this chapter, I narrowed the categories down to six: ancestors, seeing things, hearing things, mirror, trance, and character. I

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

discuss these categories next, to develop a textual description (the common experience) that conveys the essence of this experience (Creswell, 2013: 80).

This process follows the order prescribed by Jenny Nelson, professor of media arts at Ohio University, for phenomenological research, where the findings are arranged in three stages: description, reduction, and interpretation. Here, description (1989: 234) is in the interview transcript, reduction (1989: 235) is in the division into six categories, and interpretation, the 'attempt to specify the preconscious and intentional meaning of the described and defined phenomenon' (1989: 238) is what follows, as I discuss the six categories.

I remind the reader that this chapter is only part of the results, and has to be considered with *The Ghost Lounge*. The performer and practitioner are providing descriptions that articulate phenomenological experience. The descriptions are also histories of the consciousness of the performer, and ghosts are embedded in that consciousness. While we are in a noetic relationship with the world, this is a world of spirits, who are likewise in a noetic relationship with us. It would be arrogant to ignore this—if not culturally arrogant, then cosmologically so. I remind the reader of the centrality of ghosts and spirits here, because the methodology stems from the social sciences, and that suggests a humanistic perspective. This may very well be, to some extent, guided by humanistic impulses, but there is more to it than that. *The Ghost Lounge* can properly be seen as another side of a conversation, where ghosts are watching us talk about them.

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

Finally, in order to make it easy on the reader, I have placed all the performer and practitioner quotes in another font, using the convention usually reserved for longer quotes.

Ancestors

I am starting with ghosts and ancestors because I wondered from the very beginning about ghosts. I wondered whether this project was, in a way, chasing ghosts. I still wonder if this might be true. I also know, however, that chasing ghosts is not at all the same as finding them, and in chasing them, other things emerged. I am looking for patterns, and there is a pattern for how I am looking for patterns. I begin with ancestors, then, although the findings were not at all what I expected. Because of the first ghost story from MOTS1, I expected many more, but there are only a small handful. The performers did have stories related to trance and character, however. In other words, while I was chasing ghosts, other themes emerged.

I begin with Liana O'Boyle, because she had a rather extreme experience with ancestors and ghosts. Liana is susceptible to unusual experiences. Before the second weekend of performances for MOTS4, she phoned me up thirty minutes before the call time, saying that she needed to meet and talk right away. When she came to my house, she explained that she was seeing spirits and spirit dogs everywhere, and that this had been happening all week. She felt like she was going crazy and wanted help. Fortunately, I had set up

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

precautions at the beginning for this kind of event. There were always two of us present who did not enter into the trance, inside or outside of rehearsal.

Heather was also present, and she performed some spiritual healing practices on Liana, and I did a shortened version of a *limpia* (a spiritual cleaning) for special protection from the spirit realms. This included giving her a white cloth with which to cover her head during the meditations. Between us, Liana started to feel calm again.

During the meditation that preceded that evening's performance, I noticed that Liana was fiddling with her head cover, that she was trying to loosen it. It struck me that she is like Pandora, and wants to see all the things in the box before the box is opened.

The last studio work, MOTS5, inspired what were, at least in interviews, the most personal experiences with the dead. Interestingly, these are also the rehearsals when I was not present. Adam Mendez, Jr. found that the meditation leading into trance was giving him a way to keep in touch with his grandfather:

Who um passed away last year and having to see him there created a whole new, um, realm to the whole thing. And, after, the first time I saw him, I, I was, I was scared, I didn't like it, it made me very, very uncomfortable, but then, when he, when I realized it was not about he was there to, to haunt me, more to help, it really, really started to feel a lot easier. (2 May 2015)

Adam's trance experience was not only mental, but physical, and one that he could describe explicitly:

My body would always be hot when I went through this world, like I don't know why, my physical body just felt like despite how cold the room felt, some days it felt incredibly cold, I was on fire inside, and I would twitch too while in this world, and there were, there was a time when I was done, my um, my calves

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

were real sore, I don't know why, 'cause I walked uphill a lot in my dream so I was like, 'Woah, that's sick. That's really sick!'. (2 May 2015)

Evan Carson also had an encounter with the dead, in this case, his father:

One of my weird neurotic greatest fears is I'll forget what his voice sounds like, I can't find a lot of recordings of him from early on so my biggest fear is I'll forget what his voice sounds like, but um. I was able to hear his voice really clearly. (2 May, 2015)

Seeing Things

As mentioned, Liana is susceptible to unusual experiences. Her tendency to see things sometimes came out in the rehearsal process outside of the meditation:

I couldn't see Seth's face at one point, it was, he had like, he was like purple and green and um different colors. Oh, that was the night that I saw the, this like smoke coming off of this plaque that you have on the wall...I couldn't wait to talk to you after the show, I was just like, what is that, am I seeing things? (5 December 2014)

This was during MOTS4, her third time participating in one of these studio projects. By now I was used to her colorful descriptions, but this one was particularly striking. The plaque to which she referred was a gift I had received from a friend who had spent time teaching in New Zealand. He was told that it contained Maori ancestral magic. It is interesting that, of all the dozens of objects in my living room, she picked that one.

Zach Ragatz also had an experience of seeing things, this time in a meditation. This was from MOTS5, the studio work Jake Jack Hylton directed. Jake's criteria for selecting his performers were not connected to their ability toward or interest in altered states of consciousness, as mine were. The

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

language Zach uses here, however, suggests someone who has previous trance experience:

I remember at one point in time, I saw, like, my wisdom being's eyes in the mirror. That was kinda freaky, um. 'Cause like I, I couldn't ever really get it so that I could see myself in it. I was like mep, I don't know what to do, I'm just like, like pounding my head against a wall, and then, at one point, like I saw, like, like a very vivid purple eye, and I was just like, 'That's not my eyeball', and then it was gone. (2 May 2015)

Shannon Phelps likewise had a vivid inner experience:

For me, I just saw the city. Or like, not the city but I like, kinda saw the café, like the outer side of the café, um, when I would use it. And then it would be just like foggy mist...it was like mystery...I know there's something there helping me. (2 May 2015)

There were deep descriptions from the performers for every project, and the majority of these were highly intimate. I do not include most of these in my findings, because they do not reveal anything consistent about the experience, but rather point to individual personality traits. Shannon's experience, on the other hand, speaks to a general relationship between the performer and the world of the trance. It is something not quite inside or outside herself, but somewhere in between.

There were two reports of heightened clarity of vision. Shannon's experience from MOTS5 is related to control:

Like I could see everything, very clearly, that was going on. Um, which was really nice, but it was only when we were onstage; offstage it didn't happen as much, but onstage I was like, 'I can see everything, I can see everyone, I have control of everything because I can see them, um'. (2 May 2015)

Jamie Hendrick's experience, from MOTS2, is related to presence.

And I was like really present, like seriously present, you know, some—I felt like, this is funny but you know your peripheral—especially since I don't wear my glasses in the performance, I could see everything like clearly, everything was like crystal clear. (25 January 2014)

Hearing Things

When Evan met his father, it was centered on hearing, on the father's voice. Hearing was a recurring theme, more prominent than seeing. Hearing voices in this way is not specific to acting, but is a place where acting and mediumship intersect. Peter Sellers makes the connection transparent:

I mean a clear, clear voice, as if someone is speaking, but in here (he tapped his ear with an index finger). It's a strange, strange difference; it's as though somebody is speaking inside your head, which is why many people dismiss it, dismiss spiritualism as being dotty, of course. (Evans, 1968: 230).

I asked Seth Scott after his first experience with MOTS2 which sense was most prominent, and he responded with:

Mostly hearing...different words would pop up, and different things would—would hit—hit something on me each night....so it would almost be, jumping on different platforms each night. (20 January 2014)

I asked him to be more specific about what he heard:

Juliet would say things, uh, it was in her first monologue, she would say something about string, say something about untangling elflocks, things like that...And then after her it was, um, Heather's monologues, where she was saying, 'I'm going to untie myself'. It began to be anyone who said anything about untying or getting loose. That's what, that's what most popped out, most of the time. Mostly because Mercutio would say, 'The', um, what is it, 'the elflocks which are baked in foul, sluttish hairs which, once untangled, much misfortune bodes', so like *untangling* was a bad word for me...things were meant to be tangled or not tangled, not anything in between. (20 January 2014)

Seth was not hearing voices, like Sellers, but his experience signaled that I needed to pay closer attention to the participant's experience of hearing.

Liana's disembodied voice was closer to what Sellers describes:

I was not there, I was up here somewhere, and the words that were coming out of my mouth, uh, this is how, you know how like when you plug your ears and you can hear your voice inside your head? That's kind of what it felt like...I was

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

mostly not there and it was like another voice. (5 December 2014)

Heather Lee Harper also had an experience with a disembodied voice. I include a longer excerpt from her interview here because it contains information relating the performance experience to a recent traumatic experience. This is very much like a sense memory, or a triggered experience, where similar stimuli call up a former event (in this case, when she was struck by a car as a pedestrian in New York City a few months prior):

I fell and you caught me and laid me down, um, not to say I was paralyzed, but my body wouldn't move, I wasn't making any choice to not move, like I couldn't, and I started having a flashback of, um, after, earlier this year after the car had hit me and I was on the stretcher and tied down and couldn't move, which is the only time in my life that I've ever been immobilized, and then, um, I, my physically I started, I had to keep, try incredibly hard to calm myself down, not to physically shake because my body started to try to tremor, like it was doing then....And I could hear Caitlyn crying and screaming again...because when I got hit, Caitlyn said she was screaming the entire time and I never heard her. (31 January 2014)

Mirror

The mirror is a magical object, a tool, and a technology. It is a vehicle for moving back and forth between worlds, and as such, is a technology for travel in space and time. The performers all received mirrors for each studio project, and these mirrors fit the minimum requirements for a charm. For some of the performers, the objects contained a consciousness:

Before I had the mirror with me...I would just worry and worry and worry...but not really do anything...and this way I could just look in the mirror and say, 'Okay, you know until next time, until tomorrow'...you say good-bye, and it's easier to let go. (O'Boyle, 2 December 2013)

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

As Liana continued to work with the mirror, she developed a relationship with it:

I felt that guide when I looked at myself in the mirror. That's when I felt that, I felt like it was something else, something that wasn't myself but it was. (21 January 2014)

Liana's face in the mirror in meditation was different from the mirror in the physical world. These were parallel worlds where a theater in the underworld was mimicking or inspiring the theater in the world of the living. She understood these worlds as connected, but with different rules.

Seth likewise sensed the connection between the physical mirror and the mirror in meditation.

It's never left these jeans. It's, it's a reminder, 'cause I'll always go into my pockets to find something and it's there, and I go, 'Oh,' and I have to take a second, just to think about it, and I always rub it between, between the thumb and the finger. (2 December 2013)

He also felt the mirror had a consciousness of its own:

There's some kind of power held into it, and you put it there, and there, there's things to discover that you don't put there, and that's going back to the, to the cave, into the, to the depths, and finding the mirror. (2 December 2013)

Evan's personal description of the role of the mirror connected it to the larger aims of the project.

I can look at my other self, even though I just see the eyeball in the mirror, maybe that's him...instead of, you know, character building, it's more like character digging. (2 May 2015)

He also reports learning his lines more quickly than in past theatrical experiences, and he attributes that to the mirror:

I just tried to respect the mirror and through that just, like, that reflection was just kind of the mysterious aspect, and um. It was weird because Jake was like, 'Yeah, just spend time in the text and you know really work, you know the character's voice and stuff, especially if you're in lines, get off book, and if you

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

use your mirror, you'll get off book quicker', I was like, 'Yeah, right, I'll get off book quicker', but uh, it actually worked. (2 May 2015)

Adam's description reinforces the mirror's magical aspect in helping to learn lines, but the mirror becomes something more, carrying the potential for an uncanny consciousness:

It helped with lines faster, but I think what really clicked with me, like the importance of the mirror, was one time in rehearsal, we were missing somebody, I think it was Shannon, and I put the, the mirror down in Shannon's place, this is when all of us were in the rehearsal space, and I said, 'Oh, this is Shannon!' And as we did the run-through, I looked over, and it still felt like, I felt like there was someone there...a presence that I could recognize and like address to, not as an audience, but as someone else. (2 May 2015)

These are not the only instances where performers reported they could learn their lines more quickly, and they attributed this to the Kanga method. During MOTS3, when Beth dropped out, Seth took over, and learned the lines and blocking in two days. Jamie has likewise described learning lengthy passages effortlessly.

Trance

Steve Kass, who began with MOTS3, speaks critically about his experience with trance under the Kanga method:

I don't know that I felt necessarily, um, like I was under a spell, or in a trance. There was a lot of release involved. (4 September 2014)

A few months later, after participating in MOTS4, Steve was less critical, distinguishing his experiences in terms that suggest familiarity with it as an ontology:

The thing I felt most connected to was like a bridge in between Orisha and

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

something here, maybe a bridge between Orisha and ancestor, may—yeah that's a better way of putting it. But n—The spirit animal was what I felt most connected with. (12 December 2014)

Liana, on the other hand, came from the opposite direction. She had had a long interest in altered states of consciousness before her participation in the prototype, MOTS1. It was not surprising that she responded positively to the trance experience from the very first session:

During the meditation, I remember three times where it was just really powerful, and I felt like I was in a trance, but I knew where I, I mean, you know, you're aware of everything. (21 January 2014)

As the sessions went on, she started to think about being in a trance as equivalent to being in character.

I remember one, during meditation, I remember, like, turning into Juliet after we went down into the hole and back out, I remember feeling like I was Juliet. (21 January 2014)

It was clear that she had these kinds of experiences often, so the question came to mind: would she be having that experience anyway? When I asked her if this was in fact the same kind of experience she was used to, she pointedly told me no:

I've been in trance while I was performing, but this was, this was different. (21 January 2014)

This led to me wondering if there was something about the Kanga method that was outside her usual frame of reference as a performer, something that could be stated explicitly. When I asked her to define trance and spell, she responded:

I would say they're different but I do think they're linked; it's part, it's part of the same, vibration...trance is like in a moment, but a spell is longer. (21 January 2014)

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

Seth came to the project with little experience of altered states of consciousness. From the first session, it was apparent that his experiences were quite deep, and qualitatively different than the other participants': as the sessions went on, and we would move from rehearsal to performance, it was revealed that he was in fact losing large blocks of time. Forgetting the trance experience is an indication of a higher level of possession. Isis Costa McElroy, a professor of Brazilian literature and initiate into Lukumí, describes the level of forgetting entirely as 'optimal' and 'the highest state' (24 December 2014).

The intensity of his experience was apparent from the beginning, following his first encounter with the guided meditation:

It was, I felt, I didn't—okay, I'm gonna say that I didn't get anything, but I'm not gonna say that I didn't go anywhere...I just kind of got locked in black...there was some lack of consciousness, or, I don't know. Something to explore. Like it felt like whatever was there would be a dream and that my brain isn't telling me what it was, it's locking it off. (28 October 2013)

His experiences continued to get more profound as MOTS2 went on, and deepened when spectators were present. Interestingly, he also connects the presence of the spectator to the spell:

ME: Have you ever been in a trance before?

SETH: Yes, mostly during the performances. Usually with the influence of the spell it would be mo—present, like I'd feel like it would be present, that's when the trance would stay....like there wasn't one without the other. (20 January 2014)

By the end of MOTS2, he had formulated this definition of trance:

The space in between sleeping and consciousness, or sleep and awake, but complete consciousness. It's probably even more, it's purer consciousness. (20 January 2014)

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

In the next MOTS, his experiences were continuing to deepen along with his ability to articulate those experiences. Compare the previous statements to one he makes months later, after MOTS3:

Being in a trance I feel like is another form of second nature, where in average thought, *a* becomes *b* because of *c*, and this is the only way I can make it make sense in my head, whereas in second nature is *a*, *b*, then *c*. In a trance *a* is *c*, for me. There is no middle ground at all...you kind of just...go somewhere where you haven't been before, but you're always there. (4 September 2014)

It does appear that he has developed an understanding of this methodology as its own ontological system, one that exists in between other systems.

For him, the ideal state in which to enter trance was, as in many meditative states, one of emptiness:

And it felt very spell-like because this was the first time I could safely say that nothing of my own brain was—it was like that *SpongeBob* episode? Where he becomes the waiter and just deletes everything out of his brain. It felt like for whatever amount of time, brain off, that's all you knew was the character...it felt very spell-like. (4 September 2014)

Trance seems intimately connected to presence. After MOTS4, I asked Seth:

ME: Did you feel like you were more present than usual?

SETH: Yes. Absolutely. However, uh, like I was still in the like, in trance, like it still felt the same depths, like it was just a different way of deep-sea diving. (12 December 2014)

Jamie participated in four of the five MOTS projects, which makes her the most accomplished and experienced performer in the methodology. Her initial experiences were characterized by frustration, but developed into something else by the end of MOTS2:

A trance is more focusing inward and you kind of lose what's going on around me. So while I am still conscious of who I am and like, yes I'm sitting in this room and I can feel my body, I'm not focused on that and that kind of disappears. (25 January 2014)

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

Over the course of four projects, she felt that her experience in MOTS2 was a high-water mark. For example, she described the experience in MOTS3 thus:

In that, I didn't feel like um I was under a spell so much or in a trance, as I did in *romeo&juliet*, um, that one felt a lot more spiritual and magical in a way. (4 September 2014)

As her participation continued, her descriptions got increasingly more complex, and her definition of trance became much simpler. After MOTS4, she defined it:

To be in a trance, is like, my spirit has stepped out of my body and is doing something else than what my body is doing. (4 September 2014)

This is, interestingly, fairly close to how spirit mediums describe their experience:

Not really having control over, and not caring about having control over what I'm doing, but it's not me, it's just, just doing, whatever. You know, I'm just kind of observing. (Johnson, 4 February 2015)

Heather, like Liana, came to MOTS with multiple experiences of various kinds of altered states of consciousness. She has experienced altered states of consciousness during performances, and from a young age. She has been a student of alternative healing techniques which utilize various types of altered states, so this was familiar territory for her. Perhaps because of this experience, her definition of trance was fairly broad:

I mean, even just like out dancing. You know, like music puts people under trances, or being in a collective, like a crowd, you can go under trance any time you're not actively acting on your own motivation, the, uh, change in consciousness and moving in a way that's out of your control. (2 December 2013)

It can be a manifestation of group hysteria:

Like the Frankenstein movie where all of a sudden there's a big crowd of people

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

like trying to kill the monster...or you can have, like a witch doctor creating an army of zombies, you know. (2 December 2013)

It can also be an experience of heightened emotions:

Or even just like when you fall in love for the first time and those first couple of weeks when your brain is pushing endorphins and oxytocin like crazy any time you're around that person, everything is kind of fuzzy and beautiful and the world gets quiet, that's a version of trance. (2 December 2013)

Unlike Seth, trance for her is not total, but involves a choice, after which one is in two states of consciousness simultaneously:

For me, it's kind of just the letting go of conscious thought, it's uh, not that I don't have control over my actions or choices that I'm making, but it's just that something else is guiding, mm, it's releasing responsibility and letting that voice that talks in your head all the time that's judging, is turned off. (4 September 2014)

Her most complex experience in trance during MOTS (she participated in three of the five) came during MOTS4, *Hotel Athena*, where she played the title character. The character of Athena is the most elemental character in the series of studio works, with the least grounding in psychological realism. In the media accompanying the performance, she is dancing to a dance she choreographed herself, accompanied by a Merceditas Valdés song for Shango, the Orisha of fire and lightning. In live performance, there was a moment when she dances before the spectators, inside a circle of burning torches. Shango is Oshun's perfect lover, so by choreographing to this song (and its reflection of ceremonial drumbeats), she had the intention of embodying an archetypal energy that is related to Oshun. At both moments, during the filming on a rooftop, and during every live performance, she felt she was in the presence of something difficult to control:

It was a more powerful energy, it wasn't, you know, 'cause it was a world energy,

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

it was a universal energy. (9 December 2014)

After one of the final performances, she even collapsed into bed in a back room and

laid there motionless for an hour, 'cause I just couldn't. I had taken too much in. (9 December 2014)

Because of her expertise in trance, she can articulate some of its more subtle nuances. Below, she describes a partial awareness.

Yeah, well, I don't know how to get there, though, 'cause that's just something that always happens, for me, that always has, like I don't, for the most part, remember performances. Which is why I can't properly articulate on things that happen, like I can remember moments because I talked to you about them afterwards, but, if I remember a performance, I didn't do a good job in it. (9 December 2014)

This is similar to the bias in ritual trance toward forgetting or blacking out completely:

This, this optimal, uh, state, highest state of blackout, I, I wonder if it actually exists, Chris. And, I think people are trained to claim that, uh. That that would be the only, uh, that if you are not claiming that, you would be faking, so you have to go to the other extreme by saying you cannot remember a thing, and, uh, that it was a complete blackout. That's very common. I think most, most trances that I've seen, uh, people claim not to remember a thing. (Costa McElroy, 24 December 2014)

Heather articulates what Isis here describes as common in the Lukumí community, where the claim to total forgetting is evidence of the medium's expertise, although this is contradicted by the evidence that most mediums have some awareness while they are in possession trance. Similarly, my godfather, Robert, describes the community's idealization of the blackout state, and suggests that this idealization, like elements of ritual trance, is a learned behavior:

So, um, so there's an aspect to me that thinks, 'Well, are they just

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

bullshitting?’ You know? About what they’re experiencing because they don’t want to admit, in the community, that, ‘Oh, no, I don’t remember a thing.’ Because is it a, is there a community sort of pressure to act a certain way, is that another—is that another aspect of possession? (4 February 2015)

In Brazilian Candomblé, there is a tradition where ‘faking it’ is not only accepted, it is codified and perfected:

But the thing about um, faking possession uh, like there is even a tradition of it uh in Brazil, uh, *Dar um eque*, meaning to give a, an *eque*. *Eque* in Yoruba means a lie. To give a lie. This is a tradition. So what is to give a lie? To give a lie is, um, a performance which can only be um, only gay men are entitled to perform it. And it means to bring down, no? Bringing down an Orisha to pretend that you’re bringing an Orisha down in a beautiful manner. In a graceful, beautiful manner. So it’s absolutely accepted, it’s known that person is faking, *Esta dando um eque*, he’s giving an *eque*, but it’s done beautifully, so it’s accepted, it’s fine. There is no problem with it. (Costa McElroy, 24 December 2014)

Wafer writes similarly about this phenomenon in his anthropological investigation of possession:

False trance is a familiar phenomenon in Candomblé, and is known as *equé*...a ‘type of theatre.’ The existence of *equé* does not mean that there is no such thing as genuine trance. But it does mean that people who go into trance have considerable room to maneuver. (Wafer, 1991: 34)

In Candomblé, the ability to manipulate and even fake a possession does not take away from its power. The performance element of this type of ritual trance is underexamined, and it would be valuable to pursue in further studies. I mention it here because it points out that there is a performance element to ritual trance, just as there is a ritual element to trance in performance.

Beth May started participating with MOTS3. Her responses during debriefings were polite but not revealing. Seven weeks in, after the first weekend of public performances, she had a breakdown, and had to be hospitalized. By the next project, MOTS4, I was surprised that she wanted to

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

work with the Kanga method again. After she returned, she looked back on her first and incomplete experience with the Kanga method and described it as being

like that sort of hazy, twilight bit before you fall asleep every night, um, like when you're staring up at the ceiling pretending to be asleep, so you make yourself fall asleep. So it's sort of the first couple of rehearsals I was pretending to be in the trance, so I made myself be in the trance, and I l—eventually it was like, 'Oh, no, this is what that feels like'. (4 September 2014)

By MOTS4 she could fully enter the process, and engage in it in a way she believed was beneficial to her:

It was almost like, rehearsal was this tranc-y haven where I could just you know, like I, like I could do my, I could do my real life and then go to rehearsal and I would say that I, I did feel residual effects of it just because um, I, I just think it, like honestly just calmed me down in my, in my day-to-day life, and um, just made things easier just, just knowing that I would have consistency. (5 December 2014)

Further, her experience gave her another vocabulary with which to talk about her mental illness:

I feel like my experience living with bipolar disorder, is like I'm constantly at this sort of median line, or trying, or trying really really really really hard to stay at this median line, and then, there are, there are evil trances on either side and so, um. (5 December 2014)

She made a connection between trance as performance and trance as mental illness:

When I was, when I was doing *endofplay* [MOTS3], and I was just um, I was really just, completely, completely in the trance of depression, that was just like absolutely ruling my life, and, and there was nothing else at that point, and I feel like, trying to insert the trance of the character on top of the trance I was like living in, just did not work. And, so, the trance, the trance aspect, um, *endofplay*, I, I can't remember it, and I, and I just, but I just know that it, it didn't work for me and that you know, every, every night, every rehearsal was like a struggle being me. (5 December 2014)

Her experiences participating in MOTS3 and MOTS4 were (pardon the expression) polar opposites. Where the first experience did not work for her, it

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

gave her experiential knowledge that informed the second experience. Further, it taught her something about how her brain chemistry worked, and this in turn helped her in life outside of performance situations. In the following (rather lengthy) quote, she elucidates how the components of Kanga work together for beneficial therapeutic effect:

So, going into *Hotel Athena* [MOTS4], um. I. I was real, I was really apprehensive about the, you know the, I gue—I mean, like hon—if I’m being honest with myself, I get apprehensive about being involved with anything long-term, because I just, I just never—I never know; I can say that, you know, I guess, medication, ECT, can only do so much, so but I did come into it completely leveled out, and completely ready to go, and, so the fact that it was just, it was just me, not, you know, me plus disease, and then layering the trance on top of it, not only did it, it work, it just, it completely, it completely helped me, um, it almost helped me be more aware of trance states in general, in terms of, now I can feel when I’m, you know, not leveled off any more, when I’m, so, yeah I just, I’m more presently aware of altered states I guess and um.

And you know what, another thing that helped me was the um, the offering, weirdly enough, and I, I’m not sure if it’s because um, I, I definitely think it was more of a, a just a motivational thing for me, like I, I have that, and I, I could see it, and I could touch it, so it was like, it was like the absolute, just present motivation to stay sane, to stay with the character, to stay with the play, to stay with all my commitments, and not, it helped me actually more in my everyday life than it did with the production. (5 December 2014)

Finally, she articulates a nuanced view of the method:

I see the trance, charm, and spell as being three separate entities (or I guess phases) serving a common state of mind. So to me, the spell is an initiation to a more meditative way of thinking—and this applies to your plays, Chris, but also a lot of creative endeavors. The spell can occur the first time someone gets an idea, or reads a script with a particularly distinct voice, or the more literal first time they sit down for a project—specific meditation. In other words, it’s the creative spark or the trigger. I think of the trance as what results, a sort of waking state very driven by the soul, very motivated by the internal needs of the artist and the project. And I think that this idea of trance serves a pretty wide variety of projects. It could be ‘the zone’ you get in while working on something, or a performance so driven by the character you’re playing that you don’t have to think about it. I look at the charm as an aide to the spell and the trance, like a way to call them forth. Again, I think of the charm not very specifically. I think that a charm can be a physical object, but I also think that the charm can be the project itself, like the feeling when just thinking about a play makes you want to work on it. (17 December 2014)

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

Bethanne Abramovich's first and only experience with Kanga was MOTS4.

Bethanne described the Kanga method similarly to Beth, seeing it as an autonomous cosmology in itself, with some reverberations outside of the rehearsal process:

The trance for me was about getting into the ro—like romantic mind-set that you have to get when you talk, when you're talking about *Hotel Athena* and you're talking about lost loves and where they go and the nuances of that. (5 December 2014)

Character

I save character for last, because it is the theme that came up most frequently in the interviews. Using the transcripts, and looking for key words, this was the frequency with which they occurred: *ancestor* 17, *see* 78, *hear* 87, *mirror* 38, *trance* 86, and *character* 104. I discuss the performers' individual experience with character as a way of summing up their experience with Kanga, because, although the other themes help to evoke the world, their observations about character describe what it is like to be *in* the world.

In MOTS3, as He, Steve played opposite Jamie and Heather. In MOTS4, as the guide, he had no interaction with the other performers; all interaction was with the spectators. While both he and Heather performed alone in MOTS4, his experience was significantly more negative than hers. He missed the group interaction, both in meditation and in performance. He felt that he

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

could go deeper in the trance experience when there were other performers there with him:

Like I said, being able to lose yourself into the character, 'cause there's another person there, and it's like, okay it's just the character, like whatever, you know, you have your character and I have mine, um so let's just do it and we'll have fun and it'll be great and we'll explore, and discover. (12 December 2014)

He wanted longer meditation sessions:

To give my you know, permission to let the subconscious or that possession, that character, that other, come through, and take over, independently, and not worry, like everything is gonna be fine, I'm safe, this character, like the other, they know what they're doing, they know exactly what they're doing, they're not gonna harm me, they're not gonna hurt me, they're not gonna put me into danger, like they're here to help me take care of me, protect me. (8 April 2015)

He felt that with longer sessions, he would be able to trust the character to take over, or give it 'full permission' (8 April 2015).

For Steve, the character is an entity that already exists, which is entirely consistent with States' phenomenology of character, being a 'continuation rather than a change' (States, 1992: 8). The spirits from the Kanga realms are not the character, but there to help guide him toward embodying the character.

Liana's experiences were less character-centered than the other participants'. In the interviews, she spent more time discussing her own spiritual development. The Kanga method allowed her to experience a depth of access to spiritual realms that she felt also aided her development as a performer. She reported other benefits as well, ranging from a new understanding of consciousness to better communication with her mother about spiritual matters (she is of Mayan descent, and grew up with a mother

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

who was familiar with *brujería* but was always reluctant to talk about it). She saw herself as a channel, and felt that the play texts were charms, carrying 'messages from the ancestors' (5 December 2015).

Like Heather, Liana had previous experience with trance in performance, and a history of altered states of consciousness. She grew up in Sedona, a town a couple of hours north of Phoenix, famous for its natural beauty and thriving new age community. Liana was both familiar with and drawn to the esoteric. While I was guiding her through Kanga, Heather was also working with her, teaching her about Eastern-based healing techniques, and Liana described her experience as transformative. She also saw character as something that was part of herself, drawn from the spectrum of possibilities of being. The line between self and other was, for her, very thin, and the Kanga method helped clarify the thinness of that particular veil.

Seth, who has a talent for metaphor, had a particularly elegant metaphor for character after MOTS4:

Just kind of allowing your movement and emotions to fly like a kite. Blow in the wind and that wind is the character. (12 December 2014)

In terms of testing Kanga's efficacy on someone without experience in trance, Seth was a model participant. He came to the methodology with little experience of altered states of consciousness, and no familiarity with Yoruba cosmology. From the first meditation he was having profound experiences, and was the only participant to report losing time consistently. He responded to the charm and the spell, and learned to use them as tools to facilitate the trance

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

work. With each project, he became more adept at moving in and out of depths of consciousness, and even reached the point where he could allow the character to play him, like the wind. For Seth, character is something mysterious, something the performer can embody best by getting out of the way.

Jamie spoke of character as a not-quite-constituted material object. Like a ghost, the character is already there, waiting to speak through her:

Through the meditation stuff, I found that meeting, meeting the character without imposing anything on it, allowed it to come to life by itself...And a lot of my preconceived ideas about Roslyn before we actually started working were just like, 'Oh no, that was wrong!' It's like, 'No, she's not sad at all'...the character was a thing and I just met it, and started working with it. (25 January 2014)

This was after MOTS2. For MOTS4, Jamie played a character named Jamie, written exclusively for her. While Roslyn had iconic status as a briefly mentioned but never-seen character from Shakespeare, Jamie in MOTS4 was conceived after Jamie, but as more demigod than human. I wondered if the distinction was palpable for her as a performer:

Yeah, I think the three of us were, the other, in this one...I mean, we were on the same plane but we were not the same time of being as the rest of the characters were. We felt less mortal than they did. (21 November 2014)

Jamie's experience with character varied over the course of the projects (and she participated in four of the five, so her experience was, relatively speaking, extensive). For her, character is again consistent with States' phenomenology as existing in a kind of immortal state of being, while mortals are becoming (States, 1992: 21). Like the others, she thought of her performances in terms of how well she could step out of the way and let the

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

character take over. She described MOTS2 as mostly character and partly her own ego, MOTS3 as half and half, and MOTS4 as mostly her ego and partly her character. She also mentioned that for her, like Steve, the meditation leading into trance was more powerful when there was more time for it. Her descriptions of Kanga became deeper the more she practiced it, although she articulates that the intensity of her experiences declined after MOTS2, when I was not directing. This does not seem to have decreased her enthusiasm for the method, as she grew to trust it and even depend on it (using it for outside theater projects as well). Jamie also spoke of the Kanga method's therapeutic benefits (helping her find a job, resolving a personal conflict), but these were side effects to the primary effect of developing her abilities as a performer.

Heather has had extensive training in dance since early childhood, university theater training, and nine years as a professional actor in New York City. For her, the distinction between self and character is porous, and it has always been this way. For this reason, Kanga was already familiar ground for her, because

for me as a performer that line gets very blurry and characters seep into real life and I don't have a really great definition of what's real and what's not, so um the separation between the two worlds and letting go is a lot easier. (2 December 2013)

The letting go is never complete, however. The idea is to get as close as possible without losing yourself entirely:

The, I think any goal is to get, for me anyways, is to get completely lost in a character, but there's a kind of duality of consciousness where um you give ninety percent of yourself over to the moment, what's happening right now, but there still has to be that ten percent for safety that knows, you know, uh, 'Oh, I'm

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

tied to this chair, so I can't just go leaping across the room if I want to'. (31 January 2014)

Heather's experience on the rooftop, filming the dance for *Hotel Athena* under a full moon was, for her, the deepest immersion, and the closest she came to losing herself during this process. The character of Athena, as mentioned, is the most elemental character in the series, most representative of another ontology, and as such would have the least stability. Athena is also the most unlike other characters she has portrayed in her career, so the question of stability may relate to theatrical style as much as or more than issues of ontology.

Heather's MOTS experience, like Liana's, was preceded by numerous experiences in esoteric and non-Western forms of healing and spirituality that include altered states of consciousness. Already familiar with, and even versed in, performing in trance states, she found this method offered another metaphor. Its most valuable contribution, for her, was that it offered a way to formally separate from the character at the end of the process:

You're inviting other energy...and that's what makes a good actor because you are changing yourself into that person. What makes a brilliant actor is changing back into yourself at the end, knowing that you're not becoming that other person, but just kind of wearing it for a while. (9 December 2014)

Beth May's relationship to her character became interestingly complicated with the media we used. In MOTS4 the video and sound recordings were distorted. The media was degraded to give a sense of faux nostalgia, so that a past version of the performer was haunting the space while the present version inhabited it. For Beth, this

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

was like watching a half-formed person dressed in my clothes, like sort of me, sort of not me. (5 December 2014)

The sound of her own voice was even more troubling:

The thing that really bugged me was, the the the voice-overs were not my voice, or not what the, my voice sounds like...'cause people are so self-conscious of their voices anyway, so whenever, whenever I would hear like one of the voice-overs go, and I'm just like, not only does that not sound like me, it doesn't sound like the character, and the only, um, the only thing that connects it is that it's, it's the dialogue, it's the words. (5 December 2014)

A writer and a poet as well as a performer, Beth sees her voice (literally and connotatively) as a source of personal power, and she identified the media as a point where she could lose control over her own representation. In case of both video and audio, the recordings were made early in the rehearsal process, before she had a chance to develop the character. In the case of the image, the clothes are the stable element, and in the case of the sound, it is the words in the script. Otherwise, the recordings seemed to have captured something of the undeveloped character, leaving it exposed and almost uncanny.

For Bethanne, the media did not interrupt her process, but moved it further along:

I think that it put the characters of *Athena* into sort of this beginning of like icon phase...like once we saw that it made it really easy to, it actually helped with character building...our characters are important because we are in everybody's life, in that way we are iconic. (5 December 2014)

While performing the character, the simultaneous presence of the media opened up a possibility of iconic presence. Bethanne referred to altered perceptions and shifts in consciousness, and how she was aware of using a different part of consciousness to create the character. She watched herself embody the character 'like almost in front of a mirror' (5 December 2014).

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

Further, she described a split consciousness similar to Heather's, even down to the percentages, and similar to practitioners' experience of ritual trance:

It's like when they tell you like, when you're onstage, and there's a show happening, you're ninety percent character and you're ten percent actor, 'cause the ten percent actor has to do all the mechanical stuff, it was like that ten percent was what especially went subconscious. (5 December 2014)

She similarly iterates the character as having an ontological status of an already-resolved identity, and the Kanga method served as a bridge between ontologies.

For MOTS5, the performers were new to the Kanga method, and there was no development to trace from project to project. Rather than make conclusive comments about each cast member, I focus on Evan, whose articulation of character in the context of Kanga is clear. For him, the character's being-in-the-world depends upon a performance context, especially in moments of slippage:

Like if I'd messed up, or if I had to pause for something, or like hold for applause like, you'd think it would almost take you out of it, but that's when I felt really in the character...It was really in those moments where I really felt like in the character. (2 May 2015)

The character's being-in-the-world comes to life in the process of being watched, and finds its grounding in a liminal space (waiting rather than doing). The audience's interruptions almost served as an illustration of the ontological difference between the status of being and becoming, and this illustration made the character come to life. Like Heather and Bethanne, describing being immersed in the character but also aware of oneself, Evan's relationship between performer and character is 'a two-way street' (Carson, 2 May 2015).

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

He also offers a clear articulation of how the ontology of the character might connect to the ontology of a spirit:

As a person onstage, like, you have these characters and we have these different realms of like the embodiment of the spirit world, or what's us, or what's character, it's just you know, like, the Self, that's like the meeting of th—of those worlds. (2 May 2015)

His responses were surprisingly articulate, as it was his first experience with trance in performance, and he was also the youngest participant in all the MOTS projects. However, for MOTS5, he was not unique in his depth of experience, but he was unique in his ability to articulate this depth.

Notes on Results

I have done this for a lot of shows, you know, like, and then there's a moment where everything kinda gets quiet, I guess, you know like you can feel it, I can feel it switch over. So when you talk about a spirit or an ancestor, I never thought of it as possession, but something else coming in, I th—absolutely, in my opinion of what acting is, or what I do. You put yourself out of the way so the character can come through. And people accept that because you're just saying 'the character', you're not saying, 'a spirit or an ancestor or something else', you know? Which a lot of people can understand and a lot of people don't, and look at you like you're a little crazy when you start talking about otherworldly things, but. You know, like, the method. It's a more phys—it's from an outside in a way, but you're doing all of these things so you can get in the place of the character, it's the same thing, it's just a different terminology'. (Harper, 9 December 2014)

I open this section with this lengthy quote from Heather. Although her acting technique is based in university training that has the method as a starting point, she has repeatedly articulated that she uses a combination of things that work for her. This includes the method, but she attributes most of her learning to other actors and working with directors. As she works, like most

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

performers do, she adds to her technique, constantly expanding her knowledge and abilities. This might suggest that the Kanga method offers nothing more than a new metaphor. However, this 'nothing more' is not insignificant, because, as Jamie has said, 'actors do really well with metaphors' (21 November 2014). There is a possibility that the Kanga method offers a metaphor which allows for a shift in perspective that opens up a novel approach to character, and also offers a novel space of consciousness for performers, where they can be both observing and participating at once.

What exactly do the performers experience in this metaphor? To reiterate from above, when Beth put it most succinctly:

I see the trance, charm, and spell as being three separate entities (or I guess phases) serving a common state of mind. (17 December 2014)

This description came at the end of the fourth studio project, and was her own explanation for her experience. It was informed by her conversations with the other performers, and is consistent with their experience in that the spell, charm, and trance all served to create a space for a particular kind of consciousness. They all agreed that the nature of this consciousness was accessible to them through the Kanga method, and that it existed, like a place exists. They also experienced this state of consciousness as active participants, or like subjects, capable of affecting and being affected by this world.

Bethanne and Heather articulated a split consciousness or a dual consciousness, where ten percent was observing and controlling, and ninety percent was submerged or immersed in another reality. In terms of the

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

complete blackout that ritual practitioners describe as the ideal in spirit possession (in the split, this would be zero percent observation and one hundred percent immersion), Seth was closest to this, experiencing no memory of some rehearsals, and no memory of most of the performances. There were several participants (Bethanne, Jamie, Seth, Liana) who had transformative experiences with the spell, where they felt something had shifted in their personal lives. Several had significant experiences with the charm: Jamie consulted the mirror about her job, Bethanne had romantic luck, Adam felt the mirror represented Shannon when she was absent. There were also several comments about the increased aptitude for memorizing lines, along with other profound changes in perception (particularly hearing and seeing).

The performers did not necessarily see Kanga as a bridge between ontologies, but as its own ontology. Kanga was its own thing, a unique space of consciousness, and one they could talk about with me and amongst each other, relying on mutual understanding. As the work developed, it was something stable that they felt they could return to again. This was not a method that occasionally and unpredictably provided an altered state. It was repeatable, at least for these small groups of participants. The performers relied on its repeatability. It is significant that the performers' criticisms were not toward its efficacy, but toward external factors that were my responsibility and under my control (particularly time and duration of the meditation). These factors could easily be amended in order to make the practice more effective.

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

The answer to the question—how do performers, trained in Western Theatrical contexts, articulate their experience with Afro-Cuban trance techniques?—then, is this: the Kanga method creates the conditions for experience that are similar in subjective description to ritual trance. Because of the social setting, the participants develop their own explanations in order to align with their own frames of reference. The Kanga method was presented as one that was necessarily partially inaccessible, because the participants were *aleyos*, or outsiders. They were not able to access states of spirit possession, but only allowed access to light states of trance. Whether or not this trance was seen as metaphorical, it allowed the participants to enter a performance state that was conducive to their work.

This question of metaphor beckons questions that are intercultural, so I return to my second question: how can my research methodologies illuminate the inherent intercultural tensions in ways that are productive for performance practitioners and theorists? Both Liana and Heather had experiences where they felt overwhelmed, that they had perhaps gone too far. Liana was embodying ancestral energy (by consciously serving as an ancestral channel, and being subsequently chased by spirit dogs), and Heather felt a touch of Orisha energy (through the incorporation of dance rhythms that reference Afro-Cuban liturgical drumming). By creating conditions where the performers were given the tools to access altered states of consciousness, along with limitations based on the accessibility of the ritual tools to outsiders, they had parameters and limitations. For some performers, attempting to go beyond the limitations

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

led to revelation of these tensions. The performers in these cases saw the limitations as lines that they could not cross, while still maintaining the capacity to engage with cosmological perceptions and ideas that were novel to them.

I conclude that the phenomenological experiences of the performers in working with the Kanga method demonstrates that Afro-Cuban ritual techniques have a significant impact on performers with Western training backgrounds. These techniques enriched their experiences and provided them with a new vocabulary for understanding what it is to be in character. Kanga also provided them with an intercultural experience guided by a respect for difference, and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of complete translation, and in this way it offers a means for intercultural connection through art making. Further, it offered an ease of access that could augment, and for some, overshadow, their method-based training. This was through the implementation of methods that I refer to collectively as Kanga. Below I offer an aide-mémoire for performance practitioners which also serves as an encapsulation of my original contribution to knowledge. The aide-mémoire will serve as a bridge between the results and my final analysis, where I pick up and tie the threads regarding phenomenology in relation to character when there is an ontological conflation with characters and ghosts. Next is a consideration of the mirror and the screen as they function in Lacanian psychoanalytic and ritual terms. Finally, there is an articulation and elucidation of *hauntological* as a state of consciousness.

THE KANGA METHOD
AIDE-MÉMOIRE

A guide for performers and auteurs.

A method for outsiders and initiates to enter into Afro-Cuban cosmology as a means of accessing character in Western theatrical settings.

What is Kanga?

Kanga is a Bantu word that translates roughly as ‘tying and untying’ or ‘coding and decoding’. This method is a means for performers to tie and untie Western conceptions of representation, using metaphors of spirit possession for embodiment in performance. Understand that these metaphors, taken from Lukumí and Palo Monte, are not simply mental constructions. They are metaphors that can become powerful vehicles for entering into other states of consciousness.

The primary goal in this method is to reach a state of consciousness that I call Kanga consciousness. This is not exactly spirit possession, but it utilizes some of the same techniques, in order to approximate a state close to spirit possession. Kanga consciousness is a light trance, where you are aware of your surroundings, but still able to enter in a profound way into the reality of the character you are representing.

There are 3 elements to Kanga:

Spell

Charm

Trance

—Each of these speaks to the others, and they all, to some extent, rely on each other. But there is an order to them, and one has to follow the order. They build on each other, and eventually speak through each other.

1. Spell

The performers are placed under the influence of a spirit (most preferably an Orisha in the Lukumí tradition, or a Muerto in the Palo tradition, or both). In

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

the Americas, I recommend Oshun or Mama Chola. It is best if there is an initiate in these traditions leading the group as a ritual director. At the very least, there should be communication with and access to a trusted practitioner, just in case complicated messages start to come through. It is not recommended to use a generic ‘higher power’ or ambiguous Great Goddess. Specific spirits have specific wants, and specific protocols for how they are addressed. One needn’t know all the details of these expectations, but one should make every attempt to be formal and respectful. These deities appreciate this. In fact, this is more important than belief. One need not have any belief at all if there is respect. Think of it as similar to visiting another country where you don’t speak the language. Respect for the locals gets one much further than pretending to understand.

For Oshun, or Mama Chola: The performers collectively approach a body of fresh water (a river is ideal, but a fountain will certainly serve). Here they make individual, and private, requests to Oshun (e.g., ‘Oshun, help me find a new lover’, etc.). They need to request something that they want to be working on for the duration of the project (and it need not be related to the project, as long as there is a personal investment in it). Everyone should offer something (e.g., five pennies, honey and cinnamon, yellow flowers).

For other spirits: Approach them in their natural setting (Obatala in the mountains, Yemaya at the ocean, for example), make requests that are endemic to that spirit’s area of expertise, and bring offerings appropriate to that spirit’s tastes. For more information on the spirits, talk to the ritual director of your group. If you are not working with an initiate, there are numerous books available on the subject, as well as more than enough information on the Web. Spend time researching the Orisha or Muerto you are addressing, and look for common threads in your reading. Follow the common threads (e.g., Oshun likes oranges and honey and the number five) rather than esoteric variations (e.g., the path of Oshun marked Ololodi takes two of everything), and always be aware that these traditions bring their fair share of charlatans. Don’t believe everything you read.

2. Charm

Each performer receives two charms, a personal charm and a mirror charm. Ideally, the santera/santero or palera/palero acting as the ritual director would construct the charms. Otherwise, these are made by the ritual director, who

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

should have some knowledge of these systems. I designate the methods for both initiate and noninitiate below.

Personal charm (initiate):

The initiate works with the Orisha or Muerto to build a charm based on the nature of the performer's request during the spell. The performer does not reveal the nature of the request, unless there is a clear reason for that.

Generally, requests fall into two categories: love or money. It is both welcome and interesting when the requests are outside these categories, but this is rarely the case. Generally, requests also fall into two desired outcomes: attraction or repulsion. The initiate should know the category and the outcome. Using obi or chamalongo divination, and her own aché, the initiate determines the ingredients and construction of the charm.

The initiate also charges the mirrors for a certain number of days based upon the Orisha or Muerto (an example: five for Oshun). If these words do not make sense, this is not for you, and you would do the following instead:

Personal charm (noninitiate):

Performers present requests to the ritual director, similar to the above.

Together, the ritual director and the performer construct a ritual for making a charm together. Select a colored candle, based on the deity's preferences.

Light the candle and, with meditation or tarot cards (or some other trusted and familiar method to you), select a color and a set of ingredients for the charm. Ingredients can be anything, but often include herbs, gems and stones, dirt, sticks, coins, magnets, mirrors, feathers, and other animal parts. Make a small pouch using cloth of the selected color. Place the ingredients in the pouch, and tie it, toward you to attract, and away from you to repel.

Mirror charm (initiate):

Take small mirrors, one for each performer, and place them with your Muerto or Orisha, using your own aché to determine which would be the most helpful. (For what it's worth, I have had very good luck with Sarabanda). For a determined number of days (based on the deity's number, or a number that might be revealed to you in the construction of the charms), keep the mirror with the deity, using rum and a cigar, or honey and cinnamon (you get the idea: it depends on the deity again, so use what they like), apply these to the

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

mirrors, and after the determined number of days, give the mirrors to the performers with the instructions below.

Mirror charm (non-initiate):

Take small mirrors, one for each performer, and place them in a glass filled with honey. Put the glass before a yellow candle, and burn the candle for five days. Wash the mirrors in white wine, and then give them to the performers.

—Instruct the performers that these mirrors are to be used for access to the Other World, the place where the character lives. When the performer wants to work with the character, he turns the mirror so the reflecting side is up, and breathes on the mirror to cloud it over. This begins the communication. At the end, he rubs the mirror and turns it over, the reflective side down. He should carry it with him everywhere, so that there is always a connection between him and his character.

Generally speaking, the mirror is used to access the character; however, mirrors are also, and more commonly, used to access other worlds, the underworld, or the world of the dead. Be aware that the performer may meet spirits or ghosts when she is accessing the character. There are similarities to these worlds. It is kind of like a train station with multiple lines running in multiple directions.

The personal charm is used to establish and strengthen the bond between the performer and the deity. By asking for a favor, the performer is putting a desire out into the world, and because the charm is charged, the power of attraction (or repulsion) is at work. Again, belief is not necessary. It might help with the power of the charm, but that is not the point of the charm. The point is that the performer has invested something personal, and she is now waiting for something to happen or not happen.

3. Trance

The above two stages prime the pump, so to speak, for the performer to access another persona, or character. The performer has made formal addresses to this invisible world, and also has sacred objects that have metaphorical power, and now meditation can make it easy for her to enter into a state of light trance. At this point, calming the mind and slowing down the body's rhythms are all that is needed for the performer to become aware of another way of

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

knowing her character. Meditation opens up the possibilities for this light trance, where the performer becomes aware that the character is trying to speak through her. For the ritual director, it is important to understand that as an initiate or not, your role is only to guide. At this point, the character does most of the work. If you treat it like an autonomous spirit, and the performer treats the character like an autonomous spirit, then chances are very high that it will behave like one.

—Using a guided meditation, take the performers, in a group, on an otherworld journey. Use your imagination and be creative. The location can be anywhere, but I have found that caves and mountaintops are easy for the performer to imagine (possibly because they are often used in guided meditations, or are part of the iconography of popular shamanism). What is important is that this journey is so that they can meet with their character, whether it is presented as an ancestor, or an alter ego, or simply the character. However you construct the journey to meet the other, at some point you need to be quiet, and let the performers know you are going to be quiet, so they have time to have an experience being with the other. When they have come out of the meditation, it is up to the ritual director to decide whether or not there will be discussion of the meditation. I have found that the performers can be reluctant to speak at first, but once someone starts to speak, most of them will want to speak, and often in great detail. And at length.

Duration of the meditation can vary. I have found that longer meditations are more fruitful than shorter ones, and the time frames below are optimal:

Time at the beginning to breathe and relax, time for the travel to the otherworld (5–10 minutes), silent time where they dialogue with the character (10–15 minutes), time to return (2–3 minutes), and time to breathe and wake up (5–10 minutes): Total, 22–38 minutes.

Here is a map in case you ever feel lost. This map is a process that consists of seven stages. The seven stages work for the process as a whole, but also work on a microcosmic level for every step along the way, so that each of the seven stages happens in each of the three steps of the method (spell, charm, trance). When you can find where you are within each of these stages, then you know where you are going next:

Chapter Five: The Archive in Trance-Lation

0. Untying – Untie the thing: this happens at the beginning of the process, or the beginning of each step. Treat what you are working on (the text, making a charm, your character) as a bundle of tangled knots, and spend time with it until the knots start to become threads. Everything is a charm. Get to know this (whatever this is) as you would get to know a charm: take it apart and look at it and see what it is saying to you.

1. Conceiving – Daydream about the thing: take the object, or character, or text, and let it live inside you and incubate. In your wildest dreams, if all the conditions could be met, what would this look like?

2. Gathering – Gather the things you need to make the thing. This refers to all the ingredients, real or metaphorical. Look at what is there in the conceiving, and decide what you need for this. Gather incense and coffee and oranges. Gather herbs or shells or stones. Gather emotions or spiritual experiences or energy. Gather your desires and your regrets and your lost childhood. Have everything on hand that you might need for the next twenty-four hours.

3. Channeling – Ask the spirits to come in and do the thing. You have done all the preparations, now you need to be present, and let your ego fade into the background. Let it happen, and also be okay with it not happening. Being a channel means you are open, and that's what's important to remember.

4. Consulting – Talk about the thing. Talk to someone who watched you, in the rehearsal, or for a performance, or inside a ritual. If you feel like something happened, that you were somewhere else, talk about it. Attempt to articulate subjective experience as well as objective experience. Talk to someone who knows you, someone who knows the spirits, and ask them what they saw and what they heard and ask them what they think it means.

5. Sweeping – Clean the space so the thing can happen again. Always return to a clean place, in the rehearsal room, in your head and heart. When you are sprinkling salt on a doorway, you always have to do a little sweeping up. You are about to close it (this room, this charm, this heart), and before you close it, make sure it contains what you want it to contain. If you are the ritual director, spiritually cleanse all the participants, then sweep the area after the cleaning, and then take it all outside, and then clean yourself. Sweep everything before you close the charm.

6. Tying – Tie the thing back up. It contains power when it is tied, and it leaks out when it is not. Think of how it looked at the beginning, a tangle of knots. Does that tangle seem more intentional and less chaotic now? You can tie it back up as a knotted tangle, or you can tie it up elegantly, but you have to tie it up. You have to close the circle. This can be simple, as simple as locking a door (lock the door), closing the pages of the script (close it), or putting the charm back in the drawer (put it back). Or it can be very complicated, as complicated as a ritual for saying good-bye to a character (sprinkle cascarilla over the performer's head, make an x on the back of the neck, burn herbs to clean the room, and then group everyone in a circle). Something is shut, something is inaccessible now, something that was open is now closed and it cannot open again on its own.

As you work with the Kanga method, you will no doubt discover new things, and new inspirations. Be bold enough to follow your intuition, and be suspicious enough to question your intuition. One of the benefits of this method is that it does require a group, so that you can gauge each other and rely on each other for reality checks. If something unusual starts to happen, talk about it. It can be liberating to share, and it can be maddening to keep to yourself. Remember that you are inviting spirits in and not in order to heal your psychic wounds, but in order to make something. They are not coming to help you. They are coming to make something. If they do help, this is incidental to the process.

Chapter Six:

Through the Looking Glass

The Ghost Lounge: Against Capture

Having ended the last chapter with the Aide-Mémoire, I begin this chapter with an explication of the video enclosed with this written thesis. It is called *The Ghost Lounge*, and it is a mix of research and performance footage, interviews with performers and practitioners, video clips of alter-ego performance, and text. *The Ghost Lounge* illustrates the contribution to knowledge presented as the aide-mémoire, and it also serves to inform the reader of the experience of Kanga by evoking a visceral sense of what it is to be in a hauntological state (further described at the end of the chapter).

I edited the video using physicist Karen Barad's interpretation of the principle of diffraction, where the relationships between subjects and objects are seen as inextricably entangled (2007: 89–90). Rather than trying to untangle the various threads, one looks at the entanglement itself for insights, and these insights are read through one another. Diffraction is where light, water, or matter passes through multiple barriers. Once it passes through a

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

barrier it changes, and it carries the traces of each change as it passes through each barrier. Thinking of language in terms of Lacan's *lalangue*, the enjoyment of speech, I played with repetition in word and phrase, looking for 'the difference of the two logics, their split and their union in that very divergence' (Dolar, 2006:144). This created a tension between language as performance and ritual language, action and accumulation of effect. Ultimately, every word spoken is a reiteration, and in this way, words have ghosts.

Minty Donald's artistic research on urban rivers reveals an attitude toward capture that I share. Her work on the River Clyde in Glasgow involves a subject that is, like the dead, both 'rooted and constant' (Donald, 2012: 213). The dead are like rivers, in that as performers they do not adhere to the strictures of historical reenactment, but can offer 'a demonstration of [their] continued life' (Donald, 2012: 221). Initially, the videos were attempts to capture ghosts, the moments when a performer went into trance, or under a spell. These attempts failed, and the failure led to an understanding of my own impulse to capture.

Tadeusz Kantor's concept of *emballage*, wrapping to protect, to keep the hidden part of ourselves hidden, elegantly illustrates the wrapping, folding, and hiding in the connotation of the word *kanga*. In wrapping, the visible and invisible are tied together, where 'human flesh is but / a fragile and "poetic" / Emballage of / The skeleton, of death' (Kobialka, 1993: 28). Because video is a medium that reads as ghostly, and because of the nature of projection, images and words could emerge and then disappear. Through a careful arrangement

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

with attention to rhythm and repetitions, could I give an attentive viewer a sense of being haunted, questioning, like me, what if this is all ultimately not for the living, but for the dead?

The Video/Performance

I have included a DVD, *The Ghost Lounge*, that contains the video that played during the performance at my viva voce at Plymouth University at the end of March 2016. I also include the text that I read live, in Appendix F. The reader can approximate the performance by reading the text in conjunction with viewing the video. Like any approximation to a live performance, the reader/viewer will have a sense of the performance, but it will also feel a bit like chasing ghosts.

At the performance in Plymouth, there was a tension between autobiographical writing (spoken live) and formal documentation (presented in video). The blend of the academic with the emotionally intimate was orchestrated to be slightly uncomfortable. It illustrates that there is something in both performance and ritual, where technique and formality mix with the intimate and personal. Further, by providing the viewers with an opportunity to see the work in relative darkness (an anonymous darkness where I could not see their faces but they could see mine), I was telegraphing that this was a performance situation to provide space for the spectator's reflection (rather than confrontation with the spectator).

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

There are a number of threads that run through the video, crossing with the live narration, that invoke a discursive overload. The spectator is watching and listening to multiple things at once. This is a metaphorical creation of a difference tone, where the mind starts to make its own connections and construct its own narratives. The spectator experiences this with the awareness that it is happening while it is happening, and that their experience is unique and subjective, based on their own patterns of perception and personal associations. The sensory overload, the multiple connections, the mix of the personal and formal, and the ambiguity between performance and ritual approximate the experience of seeing the studio works in my living room.

The video is composed of various elements of the studio practice documentation and research. The formal interviews with performers and practitioners were a central focus for the previous chapter. The rehearsal and performance footage, autobiographical writing, and video of alternate personas serve as the focus for *The Ghost Lounge*. First, there are selections from the studio work, sampling each of the performances. The selection was based on thematic content (references to tying, hearing and seeing things, and the dead). These are in the form of animated GIFs. Second, there are selections from the interviews with the performers and ritual practitioners. These selections were based also on content, where their words would cross-reference with the themes mentioned above (tying, hearing and seeing things, the dead), or instances when they would specifically reference aspects of spells, charms, and trances. Thematic repetition reinforces the content, and

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

visual and verbal repetition lulls the viewer into a meditative state (just as

watching a video in a dark space induces a trancelike state of consciousness).

Third, there are videos of me playing alter egos, a santero-palero and an

analyst. These sections give the viewer information about Afro-Cuban ritual, or

Lacanian theory, and destabilize the narrations, as the narrator is unreliable.

The fourth element is the live performance, where I am dressed in ritual white,

reading text comprised of short prose poems (Appendix F) that are emotionally

intimate. These were written in conjunction with the studio work and the thesis,

and serve as both a psychoanalytic language of excess and surplus, and the

remains of performance, where even the words disappear. The writing (spoken

and projected) and performance (live and in video) of alter egos is intentionally

self-conscious, and slightly destabilizing; this is so that the viewer/spectator

remains conscious, while simultaneously entering more deeply into a

meditative state. The feeling of being in a state where one is aware that one's

awareness is no longer the same is like the experience of Kanga.

The reader/viewer is instructed here to have the video at hand for the

following section on stages 0–6 of the Kanga method. This is meant to

supplement the experience of the video performance. The section does not

move linearly through the video, but dances around it. The reader/viewer is

advised to watch the video through, without interruption, before or

immediately after reading this section.

0. Untying

The video begins with words on the screen that give instructions for the viewer ('Start to become aware of your breath' [01:04]). Focusing on the breath invokes a light state of trance.

1. Conceiving

Conceiving is the conceptual phase of a performance piece, where the collaborators decide how to construct something where various elements are pieced together, where similarities and discordances might reveal something, a space where, like the video suggests in the first few minutes, 'Ghosts find their way out' (00:44).

2. Gathering

During the studio projects, I collected video footage from interviews, rehearsals, and debriefings, along with autobiographical writing. After the five studio projects were completed, I sorted the footage by interviewee and date. Each of these activities constituted the gathering. The affirmation to the viewer, 'You can see and hear more / than you tell yourself you can' (03:07), suggests

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

an attitude of gathering in the observation, taking in without prejudice, and letting the connections emerge.

3. Channeling

In the Kanga method, the channeling stage is where the dead speak, and in performance practice, this is the formal performance event. I selected scenes from the MOTS works in order to illustrate certain thematic ties. The first of these is death and loss. In MOTS1, there are these words across the screen: 'When Eurydice goes, / she knows she's going to be gone / for a long time, / but she doesn't know / she'll be gone / forever' (04:49) and this moment of dialogue:

- 1: Have you ever lost somebody?
2: Hasn't everyone? (03:59)

In MOTS2, Juliet says, 'It was a great love story until we died' (09:26). Later, Susan says, 'You might decide you'll haunt them / the way they're haunting you' (14:31), and talks about ways to 'bring the dead back to life' (15:04).

There are also themes from psychoanalytic theory. In MOTS1, we see the words 'This is like being on TV' (03:42) projected on the screen to suggest that media culture creates a hunger for an imaginary authenticity, one that can only be found through participating in the representation of that same authenticity. The phrase also reminds the spectator that the words 'This is like being on TV' are themselves on TV, coming from a projection, and that words have a beingness that can be literal, physical, ethereal, and disposable. In MOTS2, Roslyn

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

talks about the desire (not necessarily for authenticity but for some stability of identity), referencing a lack, and Lacan's mirror stage:

And you draw a circle around yourself / because you understand even then
that / this needs protecting...this will be the first time / maybe and the last time
probably / that you recognize your image / in something outside of yourself.
(12:03)

There is a couch in MOTS3 that becomes the space of psychoanalysis. The character She speaks into a handheld mirror, a further reference to Lacan. The character He talks about meeting a man with mannequin hand, and she responds, uncannily, 'I've seen him' (22:21). He replies, 'When you talk like that, it really makes me feel like we're being watched' (22:25), while the other She is watching them, and us, through a mirror. The uncanny and the world of Palo are referenced through the repetition of Dog motifs. He asks She whether she has ever 'petted a dog who made sounds that made you nervous' (21:22), and in live narration I talk of 'a fuzzy thing coming through the door' just as Dog enters the screen (23:10). Finally, in the last moments of MOTS3, She is frustrated with a state of being that is limited to the symbolic order, where we cannot connect because 'our mouths are too far away from each other' (24:19).

Next, there are recurring spiritual themes running through the works. In MOTS2, Mercutio says, 'I remember the spell to make a stone start to beat again' (09:49). Roslyn talks about 'the moon, that goddam moon' (10:53). In MOTS4, the segment opens with Athena's dance (29:16), and scenes are connected with clips of Athena dancing by firelight in front of a full moon (29:37, 30:07, 32:09, and 34:03). The end of MOTS4 leads into the conclusion of *The Ghost Lounge* video, where a barrage of words are projected over the

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

performers in front of a projected video (31:23–32:08). This is an excess or overload of narration that crescendos with Athena's statement of the loss of the goddess: 'She whispers to me, when I sleep, why don't you worship me anymore? And I whisper back, we worship you, but we just can't find you' (33:53).

4. Consulting

Consulting is when the diviner, or elder, talks about the moment of the Muerto or Orisha speaking. For *The Ghost Lounge* I edited interview segments from practitioners and performers sharing their experiences of being possessed, or being in a performance trance. There are some general observations about trance when Carla talks about her grandmother, a medium in Umbanda, where, when she was mounted by spirits, 'it wasn't her. Especially because the things that she would talk about sometimes were things that my grandmother would, didn't even know existed' (5:54). There is Isis's quote on how the sign of authenticity in Lukumí culture is the blackout, where 'if you are not claiming that, you would be faking, so you have to go to the other extreme by saying you cannot remember a thing' (6:51). Heather talks about how performance for her was learning 'how to call on things but not let them become you' (7:40), and how, when working with trance, 'getting into that place is also a little scary, you know, jumping into a fire' (7:54). I describe a spirit possession experience as 'very dark and confusing and hazy' (8:05), and

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

Robert describes his experience as a decision: 'I'm gonna let this happen' (8:17).

There are first-person descriptions of trance experience. Seth describes where, 'in a dream, you open up a door but when you wake up it's closed, but you know that you've let something in, so it's there and it slowly becomes present' (20:04). Robert describes being possessed by an Orisha, feeling as though he were speaking from inside a TV box:

I'm inside of there and here's the TV screen, and I'm looking out, into the living room or the kitchen or whatever...not caring about having control over what I'm doing, but it's not me, it's just, just doing. (24:43)

This is followed by a sequence where there are multiple quotations of the experience, building in intensity. Shannon, from MOTS5, says, 'It was like a strange calm that washed over me, and I felt like a lightness to me but I was also, like, still connected somewhere else' (25:35). Gavin says, 'What I try to do is, I try to let go and let some larger creative spirit take over' (25:56). Zachary describes his encounters, where 'I never experienced that sort of like high or feeling anywhere else' (26:32). Finally, there is a longer quotation from Heather:

It's just fun when like something else takes you over for a while, and I get little goosebumps. 'Cause it's like a surge of different energy, and it feels, well it's not always powerful but it's like electric, you know, living in your skin in a different way? Or above? And being able to like be there but also see everything else at the same time? It's great. (26:54)

5. Sweeping

In sweeping, I deal with the loose threads, to make any final connections, and to remove any excess. It is important here to remain open to the idea that some loose threads that may have been considered extraneous might connect.

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

There were actually a number of these. First, there were segments where I was performing personas. As the Ritual Director throughout the MOTS studio work, I would at times adopt the self-conscious persona of the shaman-charlatan. I have seen this in ritual consultations, where the priestess or priest might do or say something to suggest the ritual is a performance. This makes the moment suddenly self-conscious or self-aware, and it is a break in the ritual flow. In ritual, as in performance, there is a conflation of the notion of authenticity with a lack of self-awareness, as if one could not be both at once. The shaman-charlatan induces doubt, and I have found that a certain degree of doubt and uncertainty can invoke a healthy tension. 'Doubt may be the best guarantee of real presence' (Phelan, 1993: 180). I perform the role of charlatan-santero/palero, in which I offer a fake *consulta* (a spiritual reading between a client and a priest or priestess), which includes a brief appearance by my dog (to further the repetition of the dog motif), and the obligatory discussion of payment (28:02–28:25). This is undercut by repetition of my hands throwing cowrie shells for a Lukumí diloggún divination (03:09, 18:00, 27:56, and 34:59), to remind the viewer that, although the world in the video has been destabilized, there is a ritual frame, and ritual frames suggest that order will be restored. There is also the persona of the Lacanian analyst, explaining theories of the orders (6:14), wrapping (12:38), and the mirror (27:24).

The final version of *The Ghost Lounge* was developed over three performances throughout 2015: at a night of electronic music in Brooklyn, a bookstore in Kraków, and a poetry reading in Phoenix. I reconfigured the

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

spoken text to parallel or emphasize the projected and (barely audible) spoken text in the video. I also added the convention of projecting fragments of the spoken text into the video, so that they would be seen and heard simultaneously, in order to collapse the separation of projected and spoken words ('wake up in warm rain' [07:09]). This culminated in the repetition of the phrase 'When she ordered a glass of salt water, I knew this was the beginning of a great adventure'. This is seen first in the video, with my hand writing the sentence in various starts and stops (03:15, 12:07, 15:15, 19:49, and 24:21), but not finishing the sentence until the moment when I speak it in live performance (26:51). The writing is incomplete and full of stutters; it finds its completion when it is uttered, and disappears. This suggests something of my approach to text in performance. Despite the materiality of the written word, the spoken word is ephemeral. Projecting the written word on a screen is a visual enactment of an impossible longing for permanence, like a soul that is written on water. Phelan notes that 'the act of writing toward disappearance, rather than the act of writing toward preservation, must remember that the after-effect of disappearance is the experience of subjectivity itself' (Phelan, 1993: 148).

Finally, as a last sweep, I gave each participant their own filters, so that each would have a distinct look. I also used filtering techniques for the text, so that each performer's words would appear with a distinctive font, and a distinctive rhythm. I found that turning the clips of scenes and monologues into GIFs gave them a particularly ghostly effect. By turning the sound down, or

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

sometimes removing it entirely, the spectator has to imagine the sound of the performer or practitioner's voice. In this way, the viewer has to engage something of her own imaginative capacity, much like a viewer is required to engage perception consciously when attending a live performance. This effect was furthered by adding a slight lag in the projected text. The subtitled text would usually follow, but sometimes precede, the barely perceivable audio. The viewer has to remember the words she just read, and then match them with the mouth movements, which might not form until a split second later. Again, this highlights a distinction between the written and the spoken word. Seeing a live performance is complete, witnessing the art as it is intended to be witnessed. I presented the video performance as full of fissures, to frame it as an incomplete representation, documentation as approximation.

6. Tying

Finally, tying is the moment in the video at the very end, when the words appear on the screen after the segments from MOTS4 fade away. The spectators are invited to take a breath together (34:08), bringing us back to the untying at the beginning, and closing the circle of the video performance. It begins with a breath taken together (a con-spiracy), and ends the same way. The trance is over.

Through a practice-led research I traced the development of the Kanga method toward hauntology, in order to articulate the beginning of a

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

phenomenology of character as accessed through trance. In the documentation, and in the process of writing and rewriting this thesis, I found a missing piece, one that needed to come to light through a practice-based approach toward representing the documentation. This turned into an artwork that demonstrates a phenomenological experience with the Kanga method.

Toward Hauntology: Chasing Ghosts

In the previous chapters I covered Lukumí and Palo Monte as ritual contexts for performance, variations of the Stanislavsky method in performer training, applications of ritual to performance, contexts and methodologies for my studio work, discussion of these works in detail, and a discussion of the results of the studio work based on interviews with the performers. Discussion of performer training led to a preliminary discussion of the phenomenology of character, and the previous chapter focused on the phenomenological experience of the performers using the Kanga method.

Now I again return to my original research questions: how do performers, trained in Western Theatrical contexts, articulate their experience with Afro-Cuban trance techniques? And how can my research methodologies illuminate the inherent intercultural tensions in ways that are productive for performance practitioners and theorists? To these I add one final question: what happens to phenomenology of character when an ontology that allows for trance possession enters the frame? This shifts the focus toward themes that have

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

emerged in the process of seeing the performer as a trance medium: chasing ghosts and the failure to capture them.

To return to the beginning, I bring back the voices that I introduced in the first chapter. There is, primarily, this voice I am writing in right now, the one that occupies this particular font. This voice speaks from the position of an initiate, and as such is aligned most closely with the Ritual Director. This voice writes (speaks) to integrate all of the voices at once. This is not the voice of objectivity. It speaks (writes) from inside a particular ontological framework. When the other voices speak (write) in other fonts, this means there is a tension at work, including ontological conflicts that may not have a resolution. I remind the reader of the other voices' roles, with more specifics for this section: the Artistic Director speaks for the concerns of the performer in relationship to training and the state of the art; the Dramaturg represents the need for academic rigor in assessing the tensions of intercultural performance work; and the Director of the Psyche speaks for a Lacanian perspective on the phenomenology of the performer in order to finally reach a point where the Ritual Director can articulate a new hauntology (the state of consciousness that emerges through the Kanga method). Again, these voices provide the appropriate vehicles through which I can allow radically different lenses to speak to each other in the same space. While African and African-derived sensibilities and European and European-derived sensibilities may not be and may never be on comfortable speaking terms, they can meet in a marginal space, somewhere along the hyphens.

**Another Phenomenology of Performance:
Third Verse, Not the Same as the First**

The spiritual center of the Kanga method is specific and particular, and largely unfamiliar to the performer-participants. The adaptation of ritual techniques for performance is not unknown. It is familiar to those educated in university-based performer training in this part of the world. However, when Heather says, 'I personally think that performers in school need to be taught uh, you know, like meditation or tai chi or qigong or things like this that bring you into the moment' (Harper, 9 December 2014), this suggests that these techniques are only peripheral. The field needs new metaphors for what the performer does, and a greater sensitivity to what is lacking. If performance begins with the body (Jones, 1998: 5), then the notion of performer as spirit medium is an apt metaphor for an intercultural ontology of performance, because it allows the performer to inhabit (if only temporarily) unfamiliar ontologies, cosmologies, and philosophies. In order to become like a spirit medium, the performer has to find the way through to the other side of a Western sensibility of the body.

Without attempting to cover the history of the mind-body problem, I am here referring to the 'Euro-American experience of the dichotomy or gap thought to exist between the cognitive, conceptual, formal, or rational and the bodily, perceptual, material, and emotional' (Zarrilli, 1995: 12). This gap may be part of an ontology where 'the rhetoric and semantics used to represent

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

"creating a character" all too often give the impression that the character is an object logically constructed by the mind and then put into the body' (Zarrilli, 1995: 13). This rhetorical dilemma seemed to disappear, or moved to the periphery, when in rehearsal I changed the word *character* to *ghost*. The shift in words signaled a shift in the performer's attitude toward embodiment, becoming something that can be invoked, and ultimately allowed in, rather than something that can be mentally constructed and physically manipulated. If the Kanga method is, ultimately, only a metaphorical shift that allows for a performer to perform, it is a significant shift. 'All languages of acting are highly metaphorical' (Zarrilli, 1995: 16), and, as Jamie said, 'Actors do really well with metaphors' (Hendricks, 21 November 2014).

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

I take my body into the performance space, whether I am spectator or performer, I take my body in. This solid flesh, that will one day melt. We have to account for that. It is an old question, but it is *the* question, and we have to keep asking it, the mortality question. To return to the beginning:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time. (Eliot, 2000)

The activities of performance are characterized by ephemerality. There is a story of Victor Turner, at NYU in the late '80s and early '90s, joking that the Performance Studies Department should be renamed the Department of Ephemerality Studies (Schneider, 2011: 95), such was the ubiquity of the concept. A performance is, like a performer's body, present in the moment of performance, and on its way to absence. There is a spectral line, the liminal space between presence and absence. This space appears suddenly, emerging like a ghost from the corner of the field of vision. This space haunts the present of performance studies (Powell, 2009: 1).

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

DRAMATURG

Presence in theater and performance is always disappearing. It can never be repeated exactly. But more significantly, it is disappearing because the performer is mortal. For Auslander, performance is liveness, and liveness in this time and place has a complicated relationship with technology. So much so that liveness only exists '*within* an economy of reproduction' (Auslander, 1999: 16). Performance is ephemeral, and theater carries traces. For Blau, theater happens at a vanishing point (Blau, 1982: 28), marking the traces of its own disappearance. For Peggy Phelan, what distinguishes performance is that it is outside of reproduction. There is no future, and, in fact, no past, because 'performance's only life is in the present...Performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance' (1993: 146). Phelan's famous pronouncement articulates the ephemerality of live performance. Diana Taylor frames Phelan and reconsiders performance for the geography of the American hemisphere:

'For Phelan, the defining feature of performance—that which separates it from all other phenomena—is that it is live and disappears without a trace. The way I see it, performance studies makes visible (for an instant, live, now) that which is always already there: the ghosts, the tropes, the scenarios that structure our individual and collective life'. (2003: 143)

Performance is what happens to the archive when it becomes part of the repertoire, where it is enacted in the body of the performer. It is this act of embodiment that distinguishes it as an ontological act, and in this way, 'Performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity' (Taylor, 2003: 2–3). In this way, it moves away from vanishing and into becoming. Picking up on this thread, Rebecca Schneider conceives of the experience of performance as not one of disappearance, but one of remaining. In the excavation of history, the dead, and memory, there are literal remains. The experience of live art and live theater is the experience of the '*recomposition of remains in and as the live*' (Schneider, 2011: 98). Keep in mind that Taylor and Schneider are referring to more overtly political work.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

It may not read as such, but this studio work is political, because there is a political dimension to playing with ghosts.

RITUAL DIRECTOR

There is an intercultural and transcultural dimension to ancestor possession. The culture of the living and the culture of the dead are rather distinct (an obvious distinction), and unless someone is channeling the spirit of a twin brother, the culture of that spirit is going to be different than the one of the medium.

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Even on less ethereal or mystical grounds, however, there is something transcultural (and intercultural) about grieving and mourning. A close reading of the texts reveals the repeated thematic of the loss of a body that is female: Robin in MOTS1 (Appendix E: 347), Susan in MOTS2 (Appendix C: 400), both Shes in MOTS3 (Appendix C: 436), and Athena in MOTS4 (Appendix C: 485). Speaking about performance artist Gina Pane, Lea Vergine writes, she 'removed herself from the scene, but in so doing expanded her body into the realm of the ethereal. The body as such has not disappeared, it's missing' (2000: 271). Jane Blocker has written about another missing body, Ana Mendieta, as she is held, spellbound, to the body work of this Cuban-born artist, and particularly the blood work, mesmerized by 'how blood remains and remembers' (2004: 107). In this space in between sentences about presence and absence, my body of work is an act of mourning for Ana Mendieta, a body of work to mourn the body of an artist who is no longer here.

Another thematic within the MOTS texts is an ontological shift toward a way of being that is radically intersubjective, where the dead are constituted as subjects. Blocker writes of how mortality and liminality are both 'inherent in performance' (2004: 106 and 115); an ontology that allows for the subjectivity on the part of the dead completes the relationship. Performance or ritual is the space in between the living and the dead. The dead write themselves on the bodies of the living. The performer becomes a screen.

The distinction between the living and the dead is not necessarily absolutely determined:

Freud, in seeing the patient's body as a screen which he could read, also saw that screen as a mirror of his own body. There is no apprehension of the body of the other without a corresponding (re)vision of one's own. (Phelan, 1993: 171)

I see myself in the ancestor, the ancestor sees herself in me. We are never completely on one side of the line or the other.

Lacandomblé: The Haunted Screen, the Haunted Mirror

As Matthew Causey draws on Lacanian theory for his discussion of digital culture 'not to extend the psychoanalytic discourse, but rather to tease out structures of subject construction in mediatized culture that reflect upon contemporary theatre practice' (2006: 21), I am drawing on Lacanian theory to

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

understand why the Kanga method might speak to Western performers with Western academic training. To tease out the structures of subject construction for performance in haunted conditions, the phenomenological experience moves into a psychoanalytic realm. Seeing and hearing contribute to the constitution of the haunted subject in performance, while the screen and the mirror absorb and reflect. The mirror and the screen act as tools of the gaze, while also revealing something about the nature of the gaze.

Seeing and Hearing: Encore

Performer interviews revealed a tendency for seeing and hearing things. Seeing and hearing things are related to altered states of consciousness in general, and have an uncanniness when applied to communication with the dead. Hearing a voice or seeing a shadow that disappears is haunting because it hints at a disembodied consciousness. The voice is speaking to you, and that shadow you are seeing is also seeing you. In the phenomenological experience of the one who sees or hears, the disembodied voices and shadowy apparitions are not usually recognized as psychic projections, but as objects:

Voice and gaze are the two objects added by Jacques Lacan to the list of Freudian 'partial objects' (breasts, faeces, phallus). They are *objects*, that is to say, they are not on the side of the looking/hearing subject but on the side of what the subject sees or hears. (Žižek, in Salecl and Žižek, 1996: 90)

Seth had experiences where he went into a deeper state of trance with the repetition of certain words that were triggers for his character. Evan heard the

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

voice of his dead father. The sound of a voice attained an other presence for these performers when they were working in an altered state of consciousness. Liana had moments when 'everything was blurry' (21 January 2014), as well as moments when sound behaved oddly. She was reciting a monologue in a performance and had the sense that 'I was up here somewhere, and the words that were coming out of my mouth' belonged to 'another voice' (5 December 2014). Dolar writes how 'hearing oneself speak' is the 'minimal definition of consciousness' and 'an elementary form of narcissism that is needed to produce the minimal form of a self' (2006: 39). Hearing the sound of one's own voice precedes seeing one's reflection in the mirror in the development of self-consciousness. Liana's experience is doubly uncanny, because the sound contains the threat of identity's disembodiment. Heather likewise had an uncanny experience related to hearing, when she heard the sound of her friend's scream six months after the event had taken place (Harper, 31 January 2014). There is an anxiety that is peculiar to the gaze and the voice, and again the threat is to the identity, or the orders collapsing.

In Lacan, there are three orders of identification: the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic (capitalized here to delineate Lacan's notion of these words from other definitions). The Real is related to the preverbal consciousness, which is an unmitigated sensorial overload of the world as it is, in all of its violence and chaos. The Imaginary is related to fantasies and desires. The Symbolic is the realm of language. They are connected in a Borromean knot (Lacan, 1999: 123).

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

There is tremendous anxiety when one comes face to face with the Real, at least in Western frameworks. Although there is no easy equivalent between the Lacanian Real and what this might be called in other cultural frameworks, there certainly are notions of the preverbal. Crossing into this realm is what ritual, in fact, is for. Ritual is an orchestrated rupture between realms, or planes. In traditional Yoruba thought, that rupture is the space between the hidden and the revealed (Buckley, 1985: 53). This is similar to Lacan's extimacy, that 'intimate exteriority' (Lacan, 1992: 139) where the inside and outside collapse. This is a dangerous place, and hearing things or seeing things in this rupture space is a marker of danger. The realm of the hidden and the realm of the revealed are receiving messages from each other.

In the world of Lacan, hearing things is more uncanny than seeing things because

in the field of the unconscious the ears are the only orifice that cannot be closed. Whereas *making oneself seen* is indicated by an arrow that really comes back toward the subject, *making oneself heard* goes toward the other. (Lacan, 1981: 195)

This is 'the void of the Other, the Other as a void' (Dolar, 2006: 160). In either a cosmological or an ontological view, the hearing that results in a confrontation with an other is uncanny, or haunted. In ritual terms, and from the frameworks I have set out, this other is a spirit, and that spirit has a name and a history. In the ontological frameworks of Afro-Cuban ritual culture, this uncanniness or hauntedness is familiar territory.

In Lacan, seeing and hearing have profoundly different functions. Because of the nature of the relationship with the other in Lacan, seeing involves the

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

'arrow that really comes back', so that visual hallucinations or seeing things involve the desire of the viewer. Hearing things is an uncanny relationship with the other because of the more passive and vulnerable nature of the act of hearing. Seeing is a relationship with the unconscious. This is why, for Blau, the act of seeing theater and performance is primarily one of literally seeing (harking back to the ancient Greek definition of *theatron* as 'seeing place'). Theater is the space for 'the dramatization of consciousness itself' (Blau, 1990: 3). Blau is referencing the spectator-performer relationship when he writes, 'Somewhere in this blinding labor from which the audience seems to appear is an imperceptible fissure between the eye and the gaze' (1990: 63). There is also, however, an imperceptible fissure between the eye and the gaze when a performer is acting as a medium for a spirit (and the same can be said to be true of performer and character).

For the Kanga method, this is ideal, because it necessarily implies that there is a conflation of the performer's identity and who the performer wants to be, along with traces of a ghost. The Lacanian drive mechanism has all the fuel it needs. For Blau this drive, in theater, is the drive to see the most concealed object, to see what has not been seen. This is tied up with taboo and the uncanny. The uncanny

is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old—established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression. (Freud, 1955: 34)

For Phelan, this uncanny, or taboo, that the gaze is driven to reveal is not as important as the revelation of the mechanism of the gaze (this coincides with

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

what Butler writes about the mirror, discussed below). The mechanism is what happens with

Cindy Sherman's self-portraits, the very effort to make the female body appear involves the addition of something other than 'the body'. That 'addition' becomes the object of the spectator's gaze. (Phelan, 1993: 150)

In the last chapter I looked at the performer's phenomenological experience of seeing; now the focus is on being seen. 'I am looked at...I am a picture' (Lacan, 1981: 106). The underlying, uncanny questions through this are: who is looking at whom? And who is speaking to whom?

The Projection Screen

For Blau's imperceptible fissure between the eye and the gaze in theater, there is, for Laura Mulvey, a fissure between eye and gaze in film. Mulvey brought a feminist, psychoanalytic lens to film theory. She demonstrated that institutionalized film in general, and mainstream film narration in particular, depend on a subject-object relationship between the viewer and the viewed (Mulvey: 1975). The fissure between the viewing screen and the spectator is that space of lack, and traditional narrative film reinscribes how the gaze is fixed, in a relation that depends not only on a patriarchal consciousness, but also a patriarchal unconscious. When the performer acts as a medium, she becomes a screen for the projection of an other (spirit) consciousness. When the performer is aware of the action of mediumship, when she is aware that she is letting something come through, there is also a space of lack. It is not

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

complete. The complete blackout that Isis suggested (Costa McElroy, 24 December 2014), the high-water mark for mediumship, is impossible, or at the least, rare. The spiritual community has a perception of authenticity that is contingent on the medium entering a state of complete possession, or at least claiming this. Seth's experiences, where he had no memory of certain moments, or entire performances, was enviable, because it suggested that the method worked for him better than for anyone else. However, to hear him describe it, he did not feel like an adept, approaching some liminal void and fearlessly jumping through. As previously mentioned, he felt 'it was like that Sponge Bob episode? Where he becomes the waiter and just deletes everything out of his brain' (Scott, 4 September 2014). Complete possession, or total immersion in the role is when the gaze, or one's awareness of the gaze, is absent.

The gaze, as I apply it to thinking about Kanga, ontologically diverges from Lacan's conception. Lacan's idea of the gaze is revealed in this story of the sardine can: he is on a fishing boat with a young man, and suddenly feels as though he is being watched. There appears to be a bright light, like an eye, on the surface of the water. This turns out to be a sardine can, reflecting sunlight back at him. The young man says, 'You see that can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn't see you!' (Lacan, 1981: 95). He extends this into a metaphor for how we see, based on our own projections. We see ourselves as we think others see us, coming from our first references for the others, usually the parents (Lacan, 2006: 68). This sense of being watched by these others follows us throughout

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

our lives, as long as we are living in the Symbolic realm, or the realm of language (and if we are social, we are in the realm of language). We are always followed by an all-seeing something. This something is hard to define, but familiar:

This all-seeing aspect is to be found in the satisfaction of a woman who knows that she is being looked at, on condition that one does not show her that one knows that she knows. (Lacan, 1981: 75)

In ritual, for an extra-human spectator, this other is not undefined. It is the Muertos or the Orishas, known but not entirely knowable.

Applying Lacanian terms to channeling in performance reveals something of the mechanism of the gaze, which in turn reveals something more about ontological difference. The privileged object (the spirit) determines the subject (the performer), and emerges from the split. The subject 'knows how to play with the mask, as that beyond which there is the gaze. The screen is here the locus of mediation' (Lacan, 1981: 107). The mask, that something that is necessary to hide behind, is not visible in the performances, but instead is constructed metaphorically through the spell, charm, and trance. The performers become adept at channeling the character, just as ritually one becomes adept at mediumship. Training can teach the performer how to work the mask, as it were, treating it as a screen on which to project the mix of self and character.

In addition to the psychological projection between character and performer, there were literal media projections with varied responses.

Bethanne found in the projections of her character a sense of instant nostalgia,

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

and an elevation of her character's iconicity (Abramovich, 5 December 2014), but this was not typical. For Beth, 'it was like watching a half-formed person dressed in my clothes' (May, 5 January 2014); Jamie felt vulnerable (Hendricks, 25 January 2014): and Liana 'hated it' (O'Boyle, 21 January 2014). Causey describes this phenomenon in Lacanian terms. When the performer is appearing in live and in digital form simultaneously, the subject on the screen is simultaneously the split subject, the capture of the gaze, and the annihilation of the subject (Causey, 2006, 8). This is not just Lacan's split subject, but more, the technologically split subject, who 'appears as the uncanny double of the performing subject' (2006: 8). This tracks with Behrend's work on spirit mediums in digital culture, where she noted a tendency for spirits to disrupt recorded media (2015: 203), as if there were too many metaphorical and real projections speaking at once.

If 'a spell is when someone is lured into participating in someone else's Imaginary realm' (Lacan, 2006: 18), the performer becomes, to some degree, the one who casts the spell. The performer as medium embodies the spirit, or the other. At the same time, the works, the plays, are spells. For the spectator, there is a sense that although you may be watching the play, the play is also watching you. For the performer, the performance text is constructed as a blueprint for an Imaginary, with repetitions of words, phrases, and themes, as constant reminders that the spell is being cast. As they speak the words, they are also casting. 'Lacan points out that this gaze is not so much seen as heard' (Blau, 1990: 76).

Through the Screen and into the Mirror

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

First introduced in 1936 (Lacan, 2006: 52), Lacan's concept of the mirror stage went through multiple modifications throughout his lifetime. Simply put, somewhere between six and eighteen months (Evans, 1996: 118), the baby looks into the mirror, recognizes the reflection as herself, and she also recognizes that she is separate from the world, and self-consciousness is born. This birth is contingent on the crossroads that occurs when the infant stops nursing, along with the simultaneous development of language. It is here, at six months, that

the mother induces a vital crisis in the child when she withdraws her breast, because the child is left wanting at a moment when it is still incapable of finding its own food and surviving without the help of somebody else. (Nobus, 1999: 107)

Lacan's mirror stage is a metaphor for the birth of self-consciousness:

Desire, a function central to all human experience, is the desire for nothing nameable. And at the same time this desire lies at the origin of every variety of animation. If being were only what it is, there wouldn't even be room to talk about it. Being comes into existence as an exact function of this lack. Being attains a sense of self in relation to being as a function of this lack, in the experience of desire. In the pursuit of this beyond, which is nothing, it harks back to the feeling of a being with self-consciousness, which is nothing but its own reflection in the world of things. For it is the companion of beings there before it, who do not in fact know themselves. (Lacan, 1991b, 223–224)

Narcissism is a symptom of this lack, whose first action is to look for a stable image where it can see itself represented. This withdrawal of the breast leads to that lack which causes the subject to try to find her image in the mirror, driven to 'find the lost object' (Nobus, 1999: 108). The baby

comes to see herself as if from the adult's vantage point, comes to see herself as if she were the parental Other, comes to be aware of herself as if from the outside, as if she were another person. (Fink, 2004: 108)

This phase of development corresponds with the beginning of language. The ego is linked to its own body, a fundamental narcissism, as well as the three orders of identification (Lacan, 2006: 54). The world of the senses, the wholeness that does not require language, becomes one replaced with words that stand for things. We move from the Real into the Imaginary realm which is the space of the mirror, into language, the realm of the Symbolic. These realms, or orders of

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

identification, are entwined with each other into a 'thingamabob...called the Borromean knot' (Lacan, 1999: 123).

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

This knot, and its component parts, are also involved in the construction of the worlds of MOTS:

The spell is sometimes Real and sometimes Symbolic, because it is the entire world, the one we are talking about, or it is the version of the world we can talk about.

The charm is always the Imaginary.

The trance is, like the spell, sometimes Symbolic and sometimes Real, because it either represents, by allowing the body to carry the burden, and later the trace, of representation, or it is the experience, the immersive ritual experience into the Real.

DRAMATURG

This is not only a metaphor for the birth of self-consciousness. It is also a potent metaphor for performance. Judith Butler finds the anchoring point (Dor, 1998: 40) between psychoanalysis and performance in her work on the performance of gender. Identity is performed, that is, 'manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means' (Butler, 1990: 136). Gender depends upon the mirror in order to create itself. And it creates itself again and again in relation to the mirror:

If desire is realized in otherness, and this otherness reflects itself, then the otherness that desire seeks must be another self-consciousness. Hence, the only true satisfaction for desire is to be found in an object that mirrors the reflexive structure of desire itself. (Butler, 1987: 40)

Again, it is the mechanism, and the revelation of the mechanism, and not the object that holds the key to satisfaction.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

The character, or spirit, that the performer is searching for, the thing that she wishes to embody (or which will inhabit her) is *objet petit a*, 'a privileged object, which has emerged from some primal separation' (Lacan, 1981: 83). The satisfaction does not come when she is in that state of complete blackout, because that is the opposite of satisfaction, unconsciousness. The satisfaction is when she is aware that she is herself, but something is moving through her at the same time:

I don't think, I mean, like, greater levels of possession would be useful for me personally. But that, like that level that you're like the bottom tier or whatever,

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

is extremely useful, because while I'm aware that that is happening, it's also happening. I'm still there, I'm just not in the way of the performance, so I'm like watching it and I'm seeing the thing that I'm doing and there's a still a part of me that remembers to turn the light off at the right point. (Hendricks, 21 November 2014)

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

The baby is 'eager to adopt its reflection in the mirror as an image of itself' (Nobus, 1999: 108). This is similar to what happens to a performer in performance. A performance can be more powerful than an actual experience in the same way that 'an imagined history and a history of a real ocular experience have similarly weighted consequences for the psychic subject' (Phelan, 1993: 4).

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

This has implications for the performer, and it has implications for the spell, charm, and trance of the Kanga method, as well as for emotional memory in Stanislavsky's method. The things the performers experience in imagination exercises and meditation are 'real' experiences. And when these deeply internal experiences start to have effects in the external world, the experience is uncanny.

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

What makes the mirror uncanny in Lacan (2006: 89) is the same thing that makes the mirror charged in Palo. Whether it's a sardine can, or the eyes of an Nkisi, something is watching. We are being watched.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

We are being watched, yes, but this is not the sardine can, not an unnervingly silent observer. The performer is not sitting on the rowboat and reflecting; he is traveling and meeting spirits. We are, finally, talking about the performer entering another realm. A realm of spirits or a realm of the unconscious—in either case, the mirror is what allows access into these realms. This space of mirror is itself the threshold. Threshold spaces are vulnerable spaces:

The felt experience of the work, I think, depends on that: the substance of the performance that is always, like the mirror's blank, open to what is not there, and the dubious thing that is. There is a contrast between something intensely willed in form and that which reflects upon it or is reflected upon, which is always escaping. (Blau, 1982: 212–213)

This dubious thing which is always escaping threatens a collapse of the orders. The sardine can itself is not threatening, but there is a threat that there is a consciousness in the light reflected off the sardine can, because 'the real

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

object isn't the object that you see in the mirror' (Lacan, 1991b: 46). The real object is

outside the register of neurotic constructs. It isn't an object relation. It's a relation to something which always lies on the edge of our conceptual elaborations, which we are always thinking about, which we sometimes speak of, and which, strictly speaking, we can't grasp, and which is nonetheless there. (Lacan, 1991b: 96)

Like a ghost, or a presence that makes itself known. Or, following Seth:

It would almost be like, in a dream you open up a door but when you wake up it's closed, but you know that you've let something in, so it's there and it slowly becomes present. (Scott, 20 January 2014)

The mirror is a metaphor, an object that gives certain fetishes power, and it is also a physical object in the studio work. The performers were given small mirrors, as charms, through which they could communicate with their characters outside of rehearsal. There were also physical mirrors used as props within the performances. Additionally, the media projections can behave like mirrors in those moments when the performer is present while her image is projected on the screen. Many things can function as mirrors:

All sorts of things in the world behave like mirrors. All that's needed is that the conditions be such that to one point of a reality there should correspond an effect at another point, that a bi-univocal correspondence occurs between two points in real space. (Lacan, 1991b: 49)

There were also points during the guided meditations where I would orchestrate a meeting between the performer and her double. There is a spiritual connection between one's everyday self and one's higher self (in Yoruba ontology this is called the *orí* in its earthly aspect and *iponri* in its ethereal aspect), and there is also a significance that is Lacanian: this is a

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

construction of the uncanny. As Freud points out, the most prominent examples of the uncanny are related to the double (Lacan, 1955: 9).

When Liana met her 'spirit guide, who was really myself, with like, bigger eyes' (5 December 2014), this was a sign of an opening into a deeper experience with the trance, a 'bi-univocal correspondence' with the other. Liana has the experience of being simultaneously herself and the other:

It is the Other which constructs and controls a human being's external world, and which regulates his or her assumption of a 'self-image'. This does not only imply that a human being's 'self-image' may be distorted despite the presence of mirrors, but also that it can still be formed in the absence of mirror images. Furthermore, the symbolic control of the imaginary implies that the assumption of a 'self-image' can occur outside the field of vision...a blind child can still assume a self-image, as long as the symbolic is there to replace and control its eyes, for it will then see itself through the words of the Other. (Nobus, 1999: 120)

The other might always be watching, but ritual methods can provide access to another kind of order, one where the other is not only observing, but performing in tandem with the subject. That experience is ghostly; this other is an ethereal reminder that

our 'own' body, then, is the one we have and the history of the ones we've lost. Our body is both internal and external; invisible and visible; sick and well; living and dead. Noncontinuous, full of jerks and rears, the body moves, like an awkward dancer trying to partner someone she can never see or lay hold of. (Phelan, 1993: 172)

We cannot hold onto the character, or the spirit, we are trying to incorporate, but it does feel like they have a hold on us. This opens up the possibility that the living are the other for the dead. The anxious version of this is the uncanny, but there is another sense, one born out of curiosity and the spirit of discovery, and this is what I am calling *hauntology*.

**Kanga Decoded:
Toward a Haunted Performance**

Hauntology is a term from Derrida (1994: 10) applied to the field of performance studies by Taylor (2003: 142), and modified here in order to address the relationship between the performer and the world of the spirits. For Derrida, hauntology was the persistence of revolution, and for Taylor it surrounds the trauma in the contextual fabric of the Americas. I am using the term to refer to the ghosts and ghostings that are peculiar to performance, in particular as they emerge through the frictions inherent in a collision of ontological and cosmological systems (Western theatrical performance traditions and African-derived conceptions of spirit possession). Hauntology also speaks to the space in between the performer and the character, or the space in between the ritual practitioner and the possessing spirit. It emerged as the Kanga method was developed and practiced in MOTS, as a particular state of consciousness where there is a tension between one identity and another. There are four characteristics that distinguish this hauntological consciousness: liminality, a highly attuned awareness of self and surroundings, what Michael Mason refers to as reflective flow, and a theatrical presence. These each need elaboration.

Liminality

Deren, as an anthropology student interested in the rituals of Vodou, studied possession trance, and, during an actual ritual, got pulled in. Erasing the distinctions between theory and practice, and no longer in possession of an objective perspective, she was led to knowledge from the inside out. She applied her knowledge of trance and possession to an artistic situation outside the specific ritual context in which she became possessed. The result is a work of hallucination and hysteria called *Meshes of the Afternoon* (Clark, et al., 1988: 109–110). Not quite outside, and not quite inside, she was situated somewhere in between. This in-between space is hauntological. In music there is the difference tone, the sound that is made when two very different tones play simultaneously, and one's own mind constructs a sound that makes sense (Russom, 30 August 2015).

This threshold space, the space in between, occupies a space that is neither secular nor sacred, but somehow both at the same time. Tamara Underiner, discussing Victor Turner in her book on contemporary Mayan theater, writes that theater

almost always occupies a liminal space as well, a space marked off for the special purpose of the performance—a space removed (or transformed) from everyday life but not quite resident in the realm of the divine. (2004: 4)

The performer lives in an everyday world, and the character lives in the divine. Between these is a liminal space.

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

A performer's work is similar to a spirit medium's. Spirit mediumship is an old idea, and perhaps there is no such thing as new media. Perhaps all media are means of providing the instrument through which ontologies, epistemologies, and cultures can speak to each other. Or at least provide the conditions where a conversation is possible. There is always a separation between the worlds, between states of being (or between performer and character, the living and the dead), and this separation is a fertile space for knowledge. Jamie speaks of the character as a not-quite constituted material object. Like a ghost, the character is already there, waiting to speak through her:

Through the meditation stuff, I found that meeting, meeting the character without imposing anything on it, allowed it to come to life by itself...And a lot of my preconceived ideas about Roslyn before we actually started working were just like, 'Oh no, that was wrong!' It's like, 'No, she's not sad at all'...the character was a thing and I just met it, and started working with it. (Hendricks, 25 January 2014)

The meditation experience offered her a way to explore the liminality, a means to occupy an unstable space, and it was in this space that the ghost came to life for her.

Increased Awareness

There are different schools of thought regarding consciousness as a measure of the performer's abilities and commitment to the role. These range from valorizing the ability to stay fully conscious while in performance to the ability to lose oneself completely. On the conscious end of the spectrum, there

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

is Charles McGaw reinscribing Shaw's warning that 'the one thing not forgivable in an actor is being the part and not playing it' (1966: 111). On the other side of the spectrum, Uta Hagen directs her students toward inhabiting from the inside, 'working towards a moment-to-moment subjective experience' (1973: 12). However, even in circles that valorize intensity of immersion in the character, where 'if I remember a performance, I didn't do a good job in it' (Harper, 9 December 2014), the performer maintains a sliver of self-awareness (Harper, 31 January 2014).

This self-awareness presents as an acute attention to the internal world in relation to one's surroundings. This includes an awareness of heightened senses that sometimes have a larger-than-life quality. Liana reports that 'something was going on with my vision' (21 January 2014); Jamie experiences the ability to see 'crystal clear' (25 January 2014) from her peripheral vision without wearing her glasses; and Evan sees his dead father clearly, and hears the sound of his voice (2 May 2015). These are accompanied by a heightened sense of clarity of space and relationship to space. Steve describes this as a heightened sense of presence (4 September 2014), while Seth describes the sense of another presence (12 December 2014). One of the more notable observations on heightened senses in performance is from I. Wayan Lendra, a Balinese artist and educator who works with trance performance, commenting on his work with Grotowski:

I am convinced that there are a number of similarities between Balinese trance performers, Grotowski's words concerning trance, and my experiences in the project. Grotowski once said, referring to the Haitian

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

trance tradition, that when a person is in trance he is 'highly aware of his surroundings.' During this time the person is deeply involved with what he is doing and at the same time he is capable of sensing and incorporating the events in his environment without being affected by them. This may be similar to the state of being of a powerful actor whose 'presence' deeply affects the spectators as well as absorbs his or her surroundings. (1995: 140)

Reflective Flow

The idea of reflective flow is from Michael Mason (2004: 102), a folklorist, anthropologist, and museum exhibit developer at the Smithsonian who writes about Santería (and is himself a practitioner). Reflective flow describes a state of consciousness in ritual moments where one is at once self-conscious but entirely at ease, reflecting on and flowing with the experience simultaneously. One is inside the ritual, but aware of the ritual, able to participate in a way that is radically subjective but also present enough to maintain some objectivity. This parallels Brecht's idea of the 'double aspect' (Willett, 1986: 271), where the performer is simultaneously caught up in the emotion of the moment and outside it enough to offer intellectual commentary. Hauntological experience includes this reflective flow.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

I act as if I were the character. I am never absent from the sentence, I am always watching.

Like Lacan's split subject, the performer experiences a division of identity, not necessarily split, but cracked, and ghosts are peeking through the cracks.

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

DIRECTOR OF THE PSYCHE

The subject is aware of being in between two places at once:

LAND OF THE DEAD – performer – LAND OF THE CHARACTER

This is the continuum, and the performer can inhabit the world of the play at the same time as she inhabits the realm of the dead. There is slippage in the crossing over, from all directions. Sometimes a performer slips into an ancestral trance. Sometimes a ritual practitioner will perform the possession, to make it just a little more theatrical. This continuum is a cartography, the places the performer lives.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The cartography here is not neutral. There is definitely more weight on the world of the dead than on the world of the character. The idea here is that the character will come, because they have the training for it, but they are not practiced in summoning spirits. Moreover, we're not looking for friendly ghosts. We're trying to make ourselves more friendly to ghosts. This is, ultimately, 'a question of repetition: a specter is always a *revenant*. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*' (Derrida, 1994: 11). We repeat words and gestures, we rehearse, we repeat the scenes, and at some point, during one of the repetitions, we notice that this time around there is something different, there is something else that is here now that was not there before.

Theatricality

There is a conscious invocation of the artifices of performance. For Peter Sellers, the performance experience is spiritual. He saw performance as a kind of trance and acting is 'rather like being a medium' (quoted in Evans: 1968, 234). For my godfather, Robert, being a medium is also rather like acting. He practiced channeling before he came into the Lukumí tradition, and recounts a conversation with the woman who taught him the art of mediumship:

'The way I look at it,' she said, 'Spirit uses people who are a little bit theatrical, and you're a little bit theatrical,' she said, 'You have to be,' she said (Johnson, 4 February 2015).

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

To reverse this equation, performance can also be a space for people who are a little bit spiritual.

The rehearsal of disappearance in hauntology is a combination of liminality, an increased awareness that is related to reflective flow, and a theatricality that allows the performer to consciously engage with the moment with enough distance that ghosts can slip through. Before I close this section on hauntology, I offer this clarification on ghosting.

On Ghosting

Performance, on the verge of the ineffable, rehearsing 'its disappearance' (Phelan, 1993: 146), is a haunted space. Ghosting is what it does. Something comes to inhabit the body, plays itself out, and then it is gone.

The Ghost has been corroded, abstracted, and dematerialized over time, the ghost of a ghost. He is unplayable, this absence, as a character. His is only good for an acting process, a way of thinking through the theatre. (Blau, 1982: 212–213)

The character is not alive when it is here in front of us, but it is present. The performer brings the character from a state of resting potential into the present.

Similarly, the medium is responsible for bringing into motion the resting potential of the dead. The medium does not bring the dead back to life, but to the present. A character 'manifests itself as a repetition or a self-continuation

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

rather than as a change' (States, 1992: 8). This is how an ancestor spirit manifests. 'Enter the ghost, exit the ghost, re-enter the ghost' (Derrida, 1994: xix). Where representation always implies a ghosting, in the embodiment of character these ghosts are not always ideas of human beings. They do carry human traces. When an iconic character is performed (like Hamlet), the character is coming back, like an old friend, for another cycle, another repetition. If the performer is particularly adept, the character fully inhabits in the present, re-presented.

This space, where spirits might speak directly to us, is the metaphysical crossroads in both cosmologies, the point where time and space come together and the worlds of the living and the dead are speaking to each other. This point is also where the three orders cross in Lacan's Borromean knot. There is a practice in Palo Monte where a devotee will tie herself, literally, wrapping her waist with a ceremonially prepared braid of ribbons before going into trance, in order to secure herself to the world of the living as she descends into the world of the dead. She ties herself so she won't get pulled in (as if she were yoking her body to the Symbolic and Imaginary in order to descend into the Real and still be able to emerge again). This is a space of creation and destruction, where the dead can speak through the medium, where the character can speak through the actor. This is the knot that reveals that 'the subject is looking for his certainty' (Lacan, 1981: 129). The certainty is one of being: 'Ontologically we envy all dramatic characters...to be rather than to be forever becoming' (States, 1992: 21). Characters are closed. They have a future

Chapter Six: Through the Looking Glass

that is already determined. So do ghosts. Performance is a dance between becoming and being, disappearance and remaining, the mortality of the living and the living memory of the dead.

Conclusion:

The Medium Is a Messenger

Retying the Threads

There are cultural frames around each of these modes of inhabiting another identity, separated by profound differences. Are these those same differences that divide ritual and performance? The frames around performance as such have been significantly loosened, even made porous at times, as performance studies tackles the knot of performance vs. ritual (James L. Peacock in Schechner and Appel, 1990: 209). The frames around African religious traditions in the New World are likewise porous. In Lukumí or Santería, this porosity is not only inherent but central to the tradition's development.

However, there are spaces where ritual and performance do seem close enough to touch. Victor Turner, writing about Brazilian Umbanda and Candomblé, expands the notion of the frame of the ritual possession event until its borders become dangerous, where Exu (like Eleggua in Lukumí) is the spirit that does not respect boundaries, and whose function it is, in fact, to transgress them. Interestingly, he also writes about a point where 'a loss of ego, the "self" that normally acts as a broker between ego and alter [ego] becomes irrelevant' (Turner, 1986: 55). The ritual space that opens up the

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

borders between self and other, toward a much larger framework, is also what

Stella Adler describes for the internal world of the actor:

The actor has in him the collective consciousness. It's as if all knowledge and all wisdom are contained in his mind. Through his vast imagination he inherits the wisdom of his ancestors without having had the personal experience. (1988: 4)

In terms of the performer's potential to occupy another identity, Adler

resonates. However, the ubiquity of cultural appropriation makes this quote

particularly problematic. The experience of another ontology through ritual

cannot replicate the ontological experience of a cultural insider. Yet it does

open a conversation, and the possibility for an exchange of knowledge.

Though I might sound hopelessly romantic or naive, intercultural work puts us

in a position to listen to each other, understanding that what we hear will

always be a faulty translation. The listening is essential. To borrow from Paul

Feyerabend, a scientist and philosopher working against a universal

methodology, discussing Vodou:

Ancient doctrines and 'primitive' myths appear strange and nonsensical only because the information they contain is either not known, or is distorted by philologists or anthropologists unfamiliar with the simplest physical, medical or astronomical knowledge. Voodoo, Dr Hesse's *pièce de resistance*, is a case in point. Nobody knows it, everybody uses it as a paradigm of backwardness and confusion. And yet Voodoo has a firm though still not sufficiently understood material basis, and a study of its manifestations can be used to enrich, and perhaps even to revise, our knowledge of physiology. (1989: 35–36)

Lukumí and Palo both have origins in cosmological systems that are similarly

viewed by the West as 'strange and nonsensical', especially if they are read as

only literal. The systems are simultaneously literal and metaphorical, providing

a practical means of working with physical energies. The stories and parables in

their divination systems are scientific understandings encoded in animistic

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

metaphors. They should be properly perceived as living ontologies. Although the dead have obvious metaphorical richness, they come from a material reality, and this translates in various ways to various cultural perspectives. When there is a truly intercultural attempt to understand the imperfect nature of these translations, there is a beginning of stepping out of one's own ontology and into another, even if that movement is only temporary.

The last stage of Kanga methodology is retying, and to this end, these are the last items on my agenda: starting with some thoughts on mediumship and digital media, I will turn toward considering the act of performance as media in a way that mirrors the digital. Next I will discuss tools and capture in relation to these considerations. This will follow with some final thoughts on my original contributions to the field, and then turn to what I perceive are the flaws in my research design. That will lead naturally to some considerations for future research.

Medium and Media

The voice coming out of the mask is always an ancestral voice...The meeting is still over the tomb. (Blau, 1982: 150)

In Chapter Five I began to discuss how the experience changed when performers were contending with their digital doubles. Jamie had a shift in consciousness when the digital version of herself played during the live performance. She felt vulnerable, knowing that I won't be able to openly

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

communicate that story' (Hendricks, 4 September 2014) because her double was speaking in a situation that was already recorded and complete. Liana, likewise, experienced the media as something that pulled her out of a trance and into extreme self-consciousness. For Beth, the sound of her recorded voice had the power to break her spell, and for Bethanne, it brought her deeper into it.

Their experiences were different, but what they have in common is that digital media produced a strong reaction. This is consistent with the relationship between technological reproduction and mediumship in ritual contexts. Not to invoke the trope of the anthropological subject afraid that a photograph will steal their soul, but there is something of an adverse relationship between spirits and recording technologies. In most of the ritual situations I have been part of, recording devices are strictly taboo. The reasons are various, ranging from social to political, and are based in part on a need for anonymity. Cameras have a reputation for disrupting the communication between the human and spirit worlds. Behrend, writing about photography and spirit mediums, makes a significant ontological point based in temporality, and the collision of spirit and technological capture:

Both resurrect the dead. Both create a certain uncanniness by bringing into the present something that belongs to the past, thus disturbing simultaneousness (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) through the interaction of two different temporalities. And both spirit mediums and the person photographed experience some sort of radical dispossession and radical self-estrangement by becoming an Other. (2015: 203)

In Lukumí houses, when there are ceremonies where practitioners might

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

get possessed, the television is always covered. On multiple occasions it was explained to me that this is because the Orishas do not understand television, and the sight of the moving images could cause some kind of crisis. I have never heard of any first-person experiences where this actually happened, and I understand it as a taboo related to captured, technological images. Behrend discusses the stop of death that photography carries, and that in East African cosmology (her field of study), the motionlessness of the image signifies no more life (2015: 220).

For some of the performers, the introduction of digital media was an overload, and perhaps it is because the task of digital media is the same as that of the performer. The performer brings the character from an other world (or a deep interior world) into the world of the living. Likewise, the television, camera, or projector brings images from one world into another. The medium of video projection has an additional element of ethereality by the way it constitutes itself from image source to projection surface, not to mention all the ghosting in between. Swedenborg considered African spirits to be the purest kind of spirit, that they take the form of light, and thus they cannot be captured, only projected (Behrend, 2015: 212). The connection, tenuous but still fascinating, points to a structural function where spirit mediums work between the invisible and the visible, making something in one world readable in another. Just as dogs are the emissaries between the living and the dead, with a stronger foothold in the world of the dead, the spirit medium is the emissary between worlds, with a stronger foothold in the world of the living.

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

Through the studio projects, I have come to understand the performer's work as that of an artist on a threshold, in that space between the living and the dead. They are performing what Glissant imagines as a 'poetics of relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the other' (1997: 11). Glissant's other is different than Lacan's inaccessible other, where 'desire is desire of the Other' (Lacan, 1981: 38). Glissant's other is not entirely inaccessible:

We 'know' that the Other is within us and affects how we evolve as well as the bulk of our conceptions and the development of our sensibility. Rimbaud's 'I is an other' is literal in terms of history. In spite of ourselves, a sort of 'consciousness of consciousness' opens up and turns each one of us into a disconcerted actor in the poetics of Relation. (Glissant, 1997: 27)

This other, not necessarily tangible, is certainly present. Part of my intention with *The Ghost Lounge* video is to bring the viewer into the space of becoming conscious of consciousness. There are fissures, gaps, and stutters as well as repetition, parallel, and mirroring, and all of these perform traces of the performer's consciousness. The performer is the spirit medium bringing information from one world to another. One can never know what the other is thinking, and a respect for the uncertainty of the translation is required for the relationship between the dead and the living. What applies to intercultural relations applies here. The animated GIF represents and embodies the relationship, being terribly incomplete and carrying only a trace of a moment that is no longer. It depends on us, the spectator, to fill in the missing information: movement, color, sound. We, as spectators, are implicated in the

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

production of this information, and we are by extension a part of the conversation.

The Tools and the Capture

To return to Evan's statement in Chapter Five:

As a person onstage, like, you have these characters and we have these different realms of like the embodiment of the spirit world, or what's us, or what's character, it's just you know, like, the Self, that's like the meeting of th—of those worlds. (2 May 2015)

Meeting of those worlds, but with a stammer. There are many layers hidden in that stammer. Respectful distance, allowing for mistranslation, and an understanding that understanding is incomplete are characteristics of intercultural work, but there is also a strain of Ortiz' transcultural: there are histories of violence and unresolved racial tensions embedded in cultural work between cultures whose relationships are connected to colonialism. I am writing this from the United States at a time when race relations are governed by the politics of insecurity and polarization. However, the Lukumí tradition's very foundations are based on a mixing of worlds (Yoruba traditional religion with whatever is at hand, bricoleur-like: Catholicism, indigenous traditions, spiritism), incorporating the correspondences as well as the dynamic tension, 'the tension, fundamental to the human condition, between intuition and intellect. We are always facing both ways' (Ingold, 2011: 9). The Kanga methodology gave the performers a framework within which to make this tension produce a tool for making performance.

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

So what is the nature of this tool? Is this tool a recuperation of an old technology (trance) applied to an old art form (theater)? Is the tool a technology at all? Or is it merely a metaphor that gives the technology a place to focus? Further, is there even a difference between the metaphor and the technology?

Kanga is a metaphor and a technology at once. Like a camera, a spirit medium is a technology for transmission: one captures the attention of the ghost, and transfers it to a surface where it can be seen (on the body of the medium). Likewise, a performer is a technology for transmission: the character itself, the duration of the narration of the play or performance itself, is caught in visual and aural suspension, not frozen in a single moment of time, but frozen within a fixed duration. To the spectator, what is visible is a dance between the energy of the character and the energy of the performer. The technology performs in a way that is poetic, which is to say, metaphorical.

Those who channel ancestor spirits and those who become characters in performance are both dealing with a reality where there is already a known beginning, middle, and end. The world of ghosts and the world of characters both have an unusual ability to charm and capture. The tool allows the performer to achieve virtuosity in negotiating a threshold space. It also opens up that threshold space, where the crossing is never entirely complete. The capture is, likewise, never complete. It is always like a ghost, a persona that reflects itself on the surface of the body of the performer.

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

The performer becomes an adept of Kanga, practiced in casting spells, and practiced in being captured within those same spells. I have been under the influence of the same Kanga as the performers. Anyone participating in this experiment leaves marks on it. Anyone who witnesses the traces leaves traces of their own. To borrow one of Palmié's metaphors for Santería, this is a MUD, a multiuser domain, where everyone contributes data input that reconfigures the application and 'parts of the very platform on which it runs' (Palmié, 2013: 254). A spell makes everyone a participant-observer, aware that there is a disruption, but never quite sure from which side of the mirror we have woken up.

How does this tool work then? The performer is a medium who signals potentiality by the act of presencing. Making something present. Making a character or a ghost present. That moment when the character emerges is everything, like when the ghost arrives at the séance, or the Muerto mounts the body. The message is only understood at that moment of confluence. That moment only makes sense at that moment. What is left, a phrase or a gesture or a feather, points back or forward to that moment, outside time, when it emerged. We try to study the message, but we end up talking about the feathers that are really and obviously pointing to the thing that cannot be studied, at least according to the methodologies that demand some kind of capture. This is like the old joke as told by Dolar, where a group of soldiers is ready to go into battle. The leader yells, 'Soldiers, attack!' and there is silence, and no one moves. This repeats a couple of times, and finally, one soldier speaks: "'*Che bella voce!*'" "What a beautiful voice!" (2006: 3). They are

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

spellbound by the voice, and the message is ignored. Or like the finger pointing to the moon in the Buddhist tradition, where people look to the one pointing the finger rather than the moon.

Research Design: Flaws

A primary flaw is that I got lost in focusing on the itinerary of the trance experience, leading the performers from one place to another. I was focused on waking, every day states of consciousness versus 'altered states', when, I realize now, the focus should have been on the in-between. This is, I discovered, where the performers and practiced mediums spend most of their time. I missed opportunities for documentation in action. In a similar vein, Heather and others expressed an interest in holding the intensive interviews right after the production of each studio work ended. This would have, no doubt, provided material on that threshold space. I stuck to my plan, however, which was to allow a significant amount of time to pass between the trance experience and the in-depth interviews (as opposed to the debriefings), in order to record the traces that were left, understanding that some things would be lost. It would have been interesting to at least try her suggestion one time, but I was too stubbornly attached to my own agenda to allow for other possible methods.

This points to a flaw in my research design, where a more realistic attitude toward capture should have been in place at the beginning. The nature of

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

ghosts and ancestors is, like performance itself, resistant to capture. I should have anticipated this resistance to capture as part of the process, that while some things will slip away, other things will emerge. In future projects I will build more mechanisms for capture (space for weekly debriefings to supplement the debriefings after each rehearsal, as well as interviews closer to the completion of each project).

Further, in the research design, there could have been a much broader selection of practitioners. I depended on the ones closest at hand and could have interviewed more practitioners in locations where Lukumí and Palo Monte are more visible (New York, Los Angeles, Miami). That would have provided a much fuller picture of the phenomenology of trance possession, an area that is still understudied and deserves rigorous investigation from researchers like myself, who are also part of the ritual communities being studied.

Contributions to Knowledge

The studio work with the performers, and the subsequent interviews with ritual practitioners, helped me articulate the space in between waking consciousness and possession trance states (what I call *hauntological*). This state, arrived at through the Kanga method, is a useful methodological tool for performers and practitioners of intercultural performance. The process taught me about the efficacy of linking character to ancestor in the ritual rehearsal process. This link, whether it is metaphysical or metaphorical (or a combination

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

of these), unlocked a code where the performers felt grounded, present in a new space of consciousness that was productive for their work. Although the act of incorporating a character is ephemeral and fleeting, for the performer it becomes the reality for the duration of the rehearsal and performance process. Much of the current state of university performer training does not account for this phenomenon, and Kanga methodology helped the performers find a comfortable way in and out of this reality. As Heather put it, one of the most useful things in the methodology was that it offered a method for 'changing back into yourself at the end, knowing that you're not becoming that other person, but just kind of wearing it for a while' (Harper, 9 December 2014). While some practitioners incorporate some kind of cooling-off period in their process, I am not aware of another methodical way of taking the performer out of the threshold and back to waking consciousness.

I consider my findings linking the phenomenology of character to the phenomenology of the dead to be further contributions to the lineage that Bert O. States began. This is a contribution to the theoretical discussion of phenomenology in performance, but its primary contribution is in its practical application. It opens another possibility for performers working in cultural contexts where Western conceptions of character are part of a spectrum.

Theater and performance studies scholar Michael Kirby wrote, shortly before his death, that 'eclecticism or diversity in the approaches to acting is one aspect of the recent change in American theatre' (1995: 53). Methods for

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

performance that are, like Kanga, eclectic, are not unusual. This is part of a larger shift, away from the centrality of the method in performer training.

Eleggua, the Trickster in the Yoruba pantheon, is sometimes personified as the Joker, and Batman's Joker is ironically demonstrating the limits of the method in the United States. There are unfavorable comparisons between Jared Leto's performance (Bastián, 2016) and Heath Ledger's (Long, 2016). Both actors played the role of the Joker in popular *Batman* films, but Ledger took his own life after production and before the film's release in 2008. Ledger's suicidal behavior gives an authenticity to the performance that United States audiences expect from method actors. Leto's performance suggests a limit to this authenticity, when the conflation of self and role start to become a public performance of bizarre behavior.

Similarly, in Afro-Cuban ritual there is a bias in favor of the medium who can attain possession and lose consciousness entirely, with no memory of the experience (Johnson, 4 February 2015 and Costa McElroy, 24 December 2014). This is complete possession and it is similar to the conflation of self and role, but in ritual contexts there are methods in place for closing the experience, for releasing the spirit and bringing the initiate back to waking consciousness. My limited sample of practitioners all have experienced the phenomenon of being partially aware, in much the same way as a performer experiences a partial immersion into a character. This is a means for inhabiting a liminal space where the performer can maintain some control within the space, along with a subsequent disengagement.

Future Research

I left aside my interest in performance art in order to focus on a more traditional theatrical practice in this work. This was a conscious choice, in order to see how the methodology would work in a controlled situation. This did limit the possible generation of knowledge of the performers' experience in prolonged trance states, where this method in durational performance practice work holds exciting potential. I would like to continue my studio work with the intention of going deeper into hauntology, developing techniques that include the body and the voice, which might become a workbook for performance in the tradition of Zarrilli's psychophysical acting. This would be aided by research that is more explicitly ethnographic, pursuing a fuller study of the various kinds of ancestor possession, inside and outside Afro-Cuban ritual contexts. Further, there are connections between the notion of authenticity in method acting and in the performativity of trance that I would like to pursue further, with potential insights into the ongoing inquiry into the phenomenology of performance.

I was grateful to have stumbled across the work begun by Behrend and her colleagues on mediumship and new media late in my research. I hope to spend a significant amount of time and energy exploring the relationships between trance performance and digital media. The projection screen as medium and performer as medium have connections that I want to realize through studio work and research.

Conclusion: The Medium Is a Messenger

Finally, although I do consider this to be the full articulation of Kanga and hauntology, this is only a beginning. What emerged in between spaces is still emerging. There is a message, or many messages. They escape capture, and finally, out of respect, or resignation, I stop trying to capture. Instead, there is another message, something that can be almost caught, somewhere in between. In between the leader's marching orders and the soldier's ear, in between the finger and the moon. The medium is not the message. The message is the confluence. Marked by the threshold. This world and that world are talking to each other. This is where the living and the dead talk to each other. We can't perfectly understand each other but that is not as important as understanding that we are talking.

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INTERVIEWS

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**THE MEDIUM AND THE MESSAGE:
AFRO-CUBAN TRANCE AND WESTERN THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE**

by

CHRISTOPHER FLOYD DANOWSKI

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Volume 2 of 2

Table of Contents

VOLUME 2: APPENDICES

Appendix A: Performer Interviews.....	1
STEVE.....	1
LIANA.....	5
SETH.....	14
JAMIE.....	20
HEATHER.....	27
BETH MAY.....	36
BETHANNE.....	40
OUR KIKI.....	45
Appendix B: Practitioner Interviews.....	53
ISIS.....	53
GAVIN.....	55
ROBERT.....	58
CARLA.....	61
Appendix C: Interview Questions.....	64
Performer Questions.....	64
Practitioner Questions.....	66
Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook.....	68
Appendix E: The Play Texts.....	102
MOTS1: How I Lost Your Mother in the Underworld.....	102
MOTS2: romeo&juliet/VOID.....	155
MOTS3: endofplay.....	191
MOTS4: Hotel Athena.....	240
Appendix F: The Ghost Lounge: Performance Text.....	268

Appendix A: Performer Interviews

STEVE

September 4 2014

I would say that I felt really focused, and that it was easier to separate two, like, I guess, maybe, no, I don't want to use *compartmentalized*, like, it was like, show or rehearsal, and then every thing else. But I don't know that I felt necessarily, um, like I was under a spell, or in a trance. There was a lot of release involved, like I said. I mean, it was like, pres-being present and focused. So I guess maybe if that equates to uh trance then sure. Um. You know kind of like I guess like you know the way that like Jerzy Grotowski, with his theatre laboratory, they worked with *via negativa* whereas it wasn't a collection of skills, it was an eradication of blocks, and this felt more like an eradication of blocks. If that makes sense. And just being present and willing to go and just let it happen. And at times it was very much like, 'Oh, wow, oh, I'm here now, oh wait what happen well, oh here, oh oh it's over, oh, like,' yeah. That was super-articulate.

Um, I guess probably the closest thing to feeling in a trance, or the closest, whatever, you know what I'm saying, um, was on, after the meditation of opening night, um, where it felt, I guess coming back to that idea of maybe present, and I don't know if in a trance you are present, but you just kind of, I guess I felt more a, a just kind of, gave myself over maybe. To just letting it happen and what happens happens. Um. I don't know, I guess, trance would need to be defined for me, for me to I guess, properly articulate it, 'cause I mean it could be, like I mean the way Jamie expressed it, sounded almost you know like possession or is it you know you're just unconscious, and then everything happens, and you wake up and you're there, and then is that a trance, or, you know is it like a state of like very acute, uh, you know, presence and focus, where, you know, you've let you subconscious take over, um, and, for the latter one, the closest I ever felt was on opening night, after that meditation and being present with all of you know, my think, being a feeling your fingers for example which is something we don't really think about very much, you know, and existing in that body I guess.

I know for me what would help is spending more time with the meditation perhaps. And I actually like to do it lying down, because sitting isn't very comfortable for me. Um, and that's kind of like my own hang up with my own body tension, that if I don't properly release or take care of, and all the rest of that, um, like there's something about giving yourself up to the floor, and just like letting yourself sink in.

When you're just like melting into the ground and letting go and I think that allows for you to be connected so much better and that presence that peace of mind, um, I think, lends itself, would behoove, a guided meditation, because you're not sitting there like, 'Wow, my hip flexor is fucking tight as shit right now', like you're all connected, you can be present to your own subconscious, your own psyche, and allow that to flow naturally, not force it, not have to keep catching yourself drifting off, worrying about this that and the other thing.

12 December 2014:

I don't know that I got exactly what I wanted, per se, but then, if I remember correctly, it's like, they'll give you what you need as opposed necessarily to what you want, if I remember correctly. And like things did change during that time period for me, in some very, like at least some semi-significant ways. So that could have been very possibly it, and I'm totally open to that.

You know, I enjoy, or I found the the the the um, being with the group of people was more effective for me personally...yeah, there was like something about being rooted with everybody to like, or, having the same root at the bottom and it branches out underneath the ground into everybody, and feeling a lot more tied in...the presence of other people allowed it to be more individuated, or you know more personal I guess, I don't know...I felt more connected with end of play, significantly more connected and present with it. Um, and I think part of it was in relation to that, or a big chunk of it was like I said, everyone doing it together, kind of going down that journey together. It was probably a little more important for end of play too because the characters actually interacted in end of play as opposed to this one, where everyone, to some degree or another, lived in their own little bubble.

And part of something else that I think is we spent, which is kind of funny, um, in end of play we spent longer on the meditation, too. Like every rehearsal, there was more time, and then for me, I personally needed that more because it takes me a little longer to like release and let go and build my way into it, um, whereas, I mean, for this process, for Athena, it was truncated a lot more, which would have worked out great if I was um able to just like you know some people are capable of just like letting it all go and dropping into it, and I'm just not practiced enough, um, to do that, to just, like I said, release and focus and just let it be, you know, clear the mind and all that crap. Um. So I personally would have liked the the the the I guess the extra time, so I could just explore and go there, um, 'cause otherwise, I'm just too in my head. I'm too in me head.

There's safety in having other people in the room to some degree, I mean, people talk about, you know, like, oh it's uncomfortable to people there and, you know, trust and all that, but for me, it's safer having other people around and more people around, like the more people who are there, like the more ok I am with it, 'cause it's like, oh it is just a performance, like, 'cause it's performative, so, I can just drop in and be fucking weird and do whatever and no one's gonna judge me 'cause it's for the performance, and then when it's just like you, or like two other people, it's like oh.

Chiron, yeah. Yeah it wasn't like that it was kinda more like being Virgil. Um. But um. Yeah, I think that was part of why it was just so easy to feel exposed the entire time, 'cause it's like, uh, it was just a, kind of a bittersweet character, um. In that it's like outwardly very nice and you know, congenial, and I'm here to take care of everyone and get them where they need to be. Then you know then I guess that is you know the goal of the concierge is like, all right I got, you know, everyone else gets to go there but me, and I have to facilitate everyone else going there and finding their resolution, but me. Um. I guess, trying to figure out what that meant and that what means. You know. And it's hard, like it's you know it's you know, a

very introspective thing, as opposed to you know when you're working when you have like a partner in a scene or something, and it's like, oh I can, I can feed off of what you're giving me, and give something back, or you know, respond you know appropriately, or even and that's another, you know like I said being able to lose yourself into the character, 'cause there's another person there, and it's like, ok it's just the character, like whatever, you know, you have your character and I have mine, um so let's just do it and we'll have fun and it'll be great and we'll explore, and discover, um, you know and it's just kind of like, you know, an investigation of sorts, you know and, you and your sidekick or you know, you and your co-detective whatever, you're like, uh feeling character things. I mean but it was just concierge is just it really was just like me and I have to live with just myself and ah.

But even the concierge like he gets to be with the audience but even then it's you're still like very alone like no one's there to like see you, they're there to see everyone else.

He was totally unappreciated for it, but that's all right. He just did it 'cause it was the right thing to do. And it ends with him just like smiling looking at everyone on the hill and then he walks off. Like what? You know. Like you know like Clarence the Angel from It's a Wonderful Life. Except way more officious and more clandestine, like he really earned his wings, he'd been doing this forever, and it's like 'ah another job well done'.

Oh, I didn't feel any Ancestor, at all. Or s plural. Parentheses s that's what that was. Um, in case no one unders—but um. You know that also like you know, I wonder how much of that stems from my own you know strange relationship with my family. So I wonder if that plays in, it's just like, ah, I'll make new Ancestors, I'll be the first one, the rest of you I don't need anymore, or you know maybe that's pompous, or anything like that. The thing I felt most connected to was like a bridge in between Orisha and something here, maybe a bridge between Orisha and Ancestor, may—yeah that's a better way of putting it. But n—The spirit animal was what I felt most connected with. Even meeting the character in trance wasn't. The bobcat was more impactful. For me. And I felt more connected, I felt more... invigorated by that. Or, yeah invigorated. 'Cause the other word I could use means the opposite. Enervate means like you just get like drained out, right? Enervate? I think it does. Anyway but yeah, that was more that presence that I was looking for was from the animal, which was definitely not an Ancestor but it was I don't know that it was like it was sent on behalf of the Orisha so to s—like you know like Gabriel in the bible, the angel, like how God's like, I can't show myself can you go deliver this for me? Thanks. I got a couple bills I got errands, I need you to make an earth run. So that's what I felt most supported by and most present with, so to speak.

I don't know, like, I feel like there's so much more to just explore in general that I don't know that I feel like I have you know the the the wherewithal to say necessarily what I want or what I don't want, um, I guess that's what I want to see right there is, what other possibilities exist, or like what else, 'cause you know last time we did it we went to the cafe, and this time we went to like the middle of like the desert, and you brought in the animal this time which was different than last time, and so I really liked that, 'cause that stuck with me. Um. So I guess

maybe if that comes back in, like I'm not gonna complain about it, um that would be, you know, nice, um. I don't kn--there was something about the cafe too that I liked in that it was you and maybe this helped me sink into it more what I was talking about earlier when I was like you know, uh, I felt like I had a difficult time getting into it, is there was more of a journey so to speak with the cafe. 'Cause you woke up and you walked out or you I mean you left your body and then you like walked out of the house and then you had to walk down the street and you'd go--it was like this neutral ground to meet this person, but you were taking, you were actively going to the neutral ground, whereas this time it was like oh you're in space and now you're in the desert, whereas before it's like oh I'm physically, not physically but you know what I'm saying like, I'm making a choice to take one step and then make a choice to make another step to you know keep actively, I'm going to this place very consciously and deliberately, whereas the other one it felt kind of you know more like you know Odysseus on a shipwreck, like I'll just end up wherever I fucking end up, hope for the best, you know, um, so it was more like I said it was yeah, everything about it was more of a choice so to speak, you know, and that was more tied in, and you'd meet with you know your shadow double your spirit double you know the character, and be like, that was also built being like, all right, I'm, you're gonna take over or you're coming with me, you're gonna hang out and eventually building towards, all right you're gonna take over for me, like really entering like that like that compact, is that a word? Is that the right word? Yeah ok yeah like the Mayflower comp-- yeah yeah yeah. So yeah, and so that, at least for me, worked a little better, going on that trip and and that was also cool is like we spent time getting to know the spirit double you just sit across from him and look at each other, um I thought that was kinda cool, I dunno, like that was interesting like I guess for me it gave me something to focus on to enter the meditation a little bit deeper than this time or, I struggled with floating in space, and that goes back to me needing that time to like clear out my mind and just be, which is I absolutely struggle with completely so that was circumvented last time by being like here is a thing focus on this one thing and you're gonna follow that through you know if that makes sense. Um. So I guess yeah something more along those lines so to speak maybe I don't know. Like, but that's the other, it's like I'm also curious to see what else what other options there are, if something else fits better, because the *endofplay* one didn't quite fit perfectly but it was more correct for me than this process was. Um. So I don't know, like I'm just kind of more curious than anything else about like what else, like I heard about for Romeo and Juliet you know like you guys would go to like a beach and there's a cave in the beach or something like that? That sounds interesting to m--like there's so many different possibilities, it's like I you know I wanna explore all of them before I make an educated decision about how I feel about it altogether, and what works best and what doesn't work best. You know.

(After discussion about using different scenarios for each character)

That might be really cool. And then it would also set up, kind of, you know, like. Each character is different, so you would meet with each character in a very different place and a different atmosphere, you know an environment, just for like tonal and mood, yeah, purposes, you know. Yeah, and I think that would yeah, especially for like something more canonical you know where it's like very fixed established characters whereas the last two, it's been a little more free form and it was more about the overall expression than it was about the character itself per

se, but that might be more of a, maybe not like a necessary thing, but a like complementary thing at least.

8 April 2015

Yeah so Seven Layers like I felt like it was a release it was like a total freedom of sorts, like you said, a conduit for you know the energy, it flows in flows out, whereas with *endofplay* by the end, there was definitely like some sort of a presence there that was shaping and kind of like leading the way, um. And it was like more of a blur and I wanted it to be more concrete with all the lines filled in and everything, and shaped up, and that's what I, that's why I wanted more exploration and to go deeper in it, you know, so that I could see the shadows and the cheekbones, and you know the wrinkles you know, the whole composition as opposed to like well this is the shape and I feel it there, like I wanted to know it, I wanted to know the presence, but it was there. Yeah, there was one night, I want to say it might have been opening night, I'm pretty sure it was opening night. They I uh we did the meditation. And I felt like I began to kind of understand that the sensation of, or it felt, from I guess, like it was like I was dipping my toe into like being possessed by the character, like there was something there inhabiting that was profoundly different from me. Um. It had an effect on the way I responded to everything else. And uh digested things and articulated it for me, because it wasn't just for me, it was articulating things for itself, if that makes sense, do you see where I'm trying to go with this? Yeah, so there was something there happening, and I just wanted to get to know it, and I wanted to like, I was beginning to trust it, in that it was there, and I wanted to get to know it more so I could further trust it and give it full permission, like let my ego go, um. To give my you know permission to let the subconscious or that possession, that character, that other, come through, and take over, independently, and not worry, like everything is gonna be fine, I'm safe, this character, like the other, they know what they're doing, they know exactly what they're doing, they're not gonna harm me, they're not gonna hurt me, they're not gonna put me into danger, like they're here to help me take care of me, protect me and help me succeed in this context. And they're best able to facilitate all of those things, you know, especially in relation to you know the success of the work of art, you know, the act of theatre in total. Yeah.

LIANA

28 Oct 2013

At first it was kind of I was really excited to get to where I was going, I was almost running to get to the moth or the moss what was—seaweed, seaweed, and uh. But then when you said 'a dark hole' I was kind of scared because normally something like that would freak me out. Like, I'm not, I don't want to crawl through a hole. So at first I was like, ok, so I was like sliding down, and then. And then the—you know, you said that we were excited to get there, so I was, I was curious but still kind of afraid, and then the blue light was so calming. I was so I automatically felt at ease but I was still watching myself, I was watching myself on this journey, I wasn't really on the journey necessarily, I was just watching a figure of myself, and then I laid down and I was in, I was actually in the hole with the blue light around me, and then after that is when I started getting a little bit

deeper into it, and I was less aware of my surroundings, I think, and um, as far as like the actual interaction it was very beautiful what we talked about and it was kind of emotional I mean I teared up and because it was like I was looking at someone else, even though I knew it was myself, it was someone I want to become, even though she was consoling me. I was consoling myself. It was very interesting, it was an interesting experience, and then, when I came out, it was like, I was sad to go but then it was like I got what I needed, it's time to go, and then I ran back, and then like I spun around and then I was back here, it was really beautiful, a nice image, I felt like I was on the beach in Mexico where I grew up there where I lived it was beautiful.

2 December 2013

Something that was very difficult for me was turning it off at night before bed, because before I had the mirror with me I wouldn't, I would just worry and worry and worry about it, but not really do anything about it, and this way I could just look in the mirror and say, 'Ok, you know until next time, until tomorrow, until we're ready to practice', and that brought so much peace for some reason, just right before bed, because right before bed is when I would you know look over my lines, and I remember them, but then to not keep them there, you say goodbye, and it's easier to let go.

21 January 2014

Going into the meditation not only helped me find my character but it helped me find my higher self. I remember having an epiphany almost the first time we went into meditation we were asked to go on the beach and then into this hole and then look into a mirror and find our higher self, and the first time I looked into the mirror, it was, I was in awe because my higher self was me, and I don't I still haven't—it was me and I realized I can be my higher self, I can be that version of me that I want to be and then I can use that into my performance. Anyway, that first time was almost indescribable, I um, it helped me, my higher self helped me create Juliet, but it was really me, I was looking into the mirror and I saw myself, the person I wanted to be, and that gave me the confidence to create Juliet, the way my higher self would want her to be created. Um. It was, I mean, just having the mirror with me all the time, made it, easier to find Juliet, because sometimes you get lost, or you go in a different direction, and this way I was able to look at the mirror and see myself playing Juliet, or myself as Juliet, and then I could take that with me, and turn it on when I wanted to, turn it off when I wanted to.

I was really deep into the character because of the process. And, and really at the end I learned more about myself, and I think it was more about the process, and finding out more about myself. I felt like that was what the whole rehearsal process was for, at least from my perspective. I really think about myself, that I would have never seen otherwise or in that way, and I think the mediation did that, I don't know you know, what was going on or what external forces were there guiding me, but, um. Overall the I don't know what else to say beside it was everything I needed.

ME: Did you feel like you were entering into an ASC?

Yeah, um, but it was only a few specific times during the rehearsal process. During the show, definitely, um, during the rehearsal process I think it was, like, during the meditation, I remember three times where it was just really powerful, and I felt like I was in a trance, but I knew where I, I mean, you know, you're aware of everything, you're always aware of everything, but, it's like this vibration or something, and and and it only happened a few times when I was really able to connect, but I mean there was like a whole whole rehearsal that where I was kind of in this, trance, and I would come in and out of it, you know, some things would take me out. Some things would trigger that or take me out of it, but I had like you know like one whole night where I was in a trance and then at the end I was like, Woah, or after a meditation, it was like, yeah, I I I indescribable, but it didn't always happen, you know? Sometimes I didn't let myself get to that, or I was thinking about other things. And I just didn't let myself relax or get into that, but sorry what was the question again?

ME: Mental physical or emotional?

Some nights would be different, like, one, like, one night I might be more emotionally involved, and this is just the rehearsal, right? Not the actual show? Like, there would be one night where I'm just like totally emotionally involved in the character and the script and in brining some of myself into it, and other times it would be, um, maybe more emotional, but other times it would be physical, I would feel like this like um like vibration, I'd feel like it in my heart and then like my solar plexus, that was mostly during the show. During the rehearsal process, I felt it was like everything was in my head, so maybe it was, a little bit of, maybe it was like, mental, and emotional I don't know I just felt a lot right here (gestures to the crown of her head).

During the show it was physical. During the show I felt I mean there was a few times where I felt this—like in my heart I felt like this weird like vibration feeling, and I only noticed it when I was laying on the ground, that's when I I noticed, like this like strange feeling I don't know how to explain it but I was just like fully into it, my heart was into it maybe one night, the other night, my my solar plexus felt like it was vibrating, so that was, into I felt different every night or I went through a series of emotions, and and then there was a lot of stuff going on with my head, I remember one, during meditation, I remember, like, turning into Juliet after we went down into the hole and back out, I remember feeling like I was Juliet, I was like in this trance and the whole rehearsal process went great because I was in this trance, but I couldn't get back to that again, except during the show, because there was all of these external things going on. I mean, I did for seconds at a time, like maybe during a monologue I was in it, and then during a scene with a partner I was out of it, and then again, it was like in and out, in and out, in and out, and then there, you know sometimes I was in it the whole time, and sometimes just for like the last monologue or something, or you know it was just in and out a lot. And I did want to go deeper, but I think it was just, taking time, sometimes we didn't um meditate as long I think, the longer you do it, it makes a difference, for me, because I can let go of things more.

I mean, I was still there but I didn't have enough time to let go of things. So it was still nice to have that, it was still necessary, but, the longer, longer was better. Because you need that time to let go, to really be there, and and the more you

described the beach and and touching and all the senses, that, that really helped, I was I was there, I was touching the dirt, I was, and so, yeah, longer is better, the more you describe things, taste touch smell.

I've been in trance while I was performing, but this was this was different. Because. It. I mean I I lost entire monologues, and that's happened to me before while I've been performing, but I I—I like, I was so, it was like, something was going on with my vision, and my head and, like when I would get lost it would be up here (points to her forehead/temples), and it was like, everything was blurry and I was saying it, and I just, I was gone, and that's happened to me before, but it's more emotional, and this, this was in my head, and I lost the entire monol—or or I'd be looking at at at someone saying their monologue or Joey or something and I would just be lost, and then I it's like I didn't I don't even know I didn't even know I was in a show at some points I was just like, Woah. And it just took over, and I think it was, it it had something to do with the the rehearsal process of course, it had to. But I don't know exactly how to describe it, but it was it was much different than any trance I've ever felt in a show.

I, I was almost always in a trance when Heather, or, really, everyone at some point, when—when during everyone's monologues, um, Heather, I was in a—I was, like, with Heather's monologues sometimes I would just like, I would just completely go, and, and I would have to watch myself because I would just be in such a trance that I wouldn't be thinking about anything else with Heather's monologues, during the rehearsal process especially, and then everyone else's um you know during the show, like uh, Jamie's an—everyone's. Everyone's, and I think, what I picked up on, was when they were kind of, just, maybe they were in a trance or whatever we want to call it, maybe it was those times when they were feeling that, too, that's when I felt it was like, and and I remember talking to everyone after, and they said, You know, this monologue, I was just saying it, and that's when I was connecting to it, too, it was all connected.

Well, with Heather's I remember not, I couldn't even listen to the words she was saying the first few times, because I was just like, emotionally, and spiritually, involved in, whashit like, because later on, I, I, when I wasn't in the trance, I actually listened to what she was saying, but the first few times I couldn't, it was like, everything it was just like, woo woo woo, and I couldn't, I. I couldn't even make out what she was saying because I was so involved. I was just, I could, there was no thoughts coming into my head, I was just, I couldn't take my eyes off of her and, and um, I would say, spiritually and emotionally just connected to what she was saying. Because she was connected probably.

With everyone else's, and Jamie's, and Heath—everyone else it was, it was fun to watch (watching their images on video) and it was cute, and it was, I liked it, but when it came to me, I hated it, I hated it, I don't know why, but I but I, because I knew it was so real, I knew that that's, those are the things I do, that's how I talk, that's how I sound, and I hated it.

Jamie's was so funny, and that's how she is, she's just like funny, she knows what she's saying all the time, and then it comes to me, and I look so, like passive and weak and dumb, I just I just I hated it, I hated it. But then, I realize that that's that's me and, I mean, I hope people don't get super-annoyed, or maybe it was to show

me what I need to change or something. But then, looking at everyone else's, I didn't, it wasn't weird, or, it was, totally fun and funny and you love that stuff about people, and, but it was still hard to watch and it still is, like, but it was hard to watch my monologues, when I re-watched the video, I fell in love with everything again, 'cause I didn't want to watch my monologues. The first time I watched the video I skipped through my monologues, and the video, and then the second time I watched it I watched it through and I was really happy with everything. And I realized, you know that's us, that's us being vulnerable and that's who we are, and um, and then I started to appreciate it more. But during the process I hated it, I turned my head. I turned my head every time, I didn't watch it, and I tried to think about something else when my video was going on, every time it was like, Ok think about your lines or something, and I couldn't be in a trance at those points, it took me out, because I was thinking so much about, ugh.

But it really, it did kind of take me out, 'cause I I know th—, one of the scenes right after an interview was Jamie, the one of Jamie, and I struggled with that scene, um because I was so insecure about the video that just played, it was the one where I sounded, I don't even know what I was saying, well, I understood what I was trying to say, but I thought maybe other people would think it was, I was just dragging on, not saying anything.

I was like, maybe I feel like maybe no one would understand what I was trying to say. I don't know, but anyway, that took me out of the next scene, because I was just really insecure about it, and then I think I was acting insecure with Jamie in the scene, and I wasn't trying to be, but that was how I felt.

ME: Define spell.

I don't see a spell as being a bad thing like some people might perceive it as, it's just like a, like a light, like an aura. It's um, something to move you in the direction that you want to be, and I think my spell, was fin—like seeing, the power of visualization, seeing who I want to be and realizing that that is who I am. How to describe a spell, I don't know, I don't see it as, it's just this little, light.

I think we're always under spells, we just don't really realize it at the time. I think my mom cast spells on me all the time, but it's like through thought and creating matter and um, yeah, I think, I think I have.

ME: Define trance.

Trance is. Is like a, a spell but it's, it's um. Mm, like a little bit, stronger, I don't know, maybe they're the s—maybe they're the same thing, but trance is just moments, and a spell is, everywhere, I don't know.

I would say they're different but I do think they're linked, it's part, it's part of the same, vibration, the same, the same magic that we can all create, we all have the power to make, trance is like in a moment, but a spell is longer.

I never felt like a, like a, specific entity necessarily, like, I didn't, well, ok, I did, I felt that guide when I looked at myself in the mirror. That's when I felt that, I felt like it was something else, something that wasn't myself but it was. So it was a

part of me, but no, I didn't feel like there was, I didn't really, I didn't feel like there was another, another entity, but. Ok this is crazy I was watching the video, and at the very end there's a face in the light, at the very end of the show, because you re-edited it, it was during Seth's monologue. This is crazy, I mean it could have just been a shadow on the light, but there's a face with a light at the top, like you're shining a light on Seth and then up on the ceiling there's a face watching over us, or Seth or something.

I always look for messages where there probably isn't a message, or something, so it's probably just me being crazy, but I, I was just watching it and then I was like, Woah, to see this face in the light....that's something that I realized in the show, how like, paranoid I was, or like, I was finding, I was trying to find meaning out of something that I shouldn't have, I was looking in the wrong place a lot of the time. In the script, when I was trying to understand the script, I was looking at things that, I was looking for signs or things in weird places that were, I was, instead of just like, saying the words. You know, and I realize, that made me realize something about myself, I do that all the time. I do that everywhere. Instead of just letting things happen, I try to analyze everything, and, and derive meaning out of something that doesn't have, that shouldn't, that doesn't necessarily need to have meaning, but then, I find, that gem, that hidden gem, that thing that I was supposed to know. Like dreams, you know all these things happen but then within the dream you find something that you're supposed to know. And one of the dreams that you were in, you were my guide in one dream and, and um, I don't know, seahorses, if there's any relevance to seahorses, but we were playing this game where you like, you, you have a bunch of stuff in your hand, and you roll it and you put it out and there's a message for you and then, what came up, and you were doing my reading, and what came up was two seahorses, and all you said was, uh, Forget about that other stuff, focus on what you need to focus on, and. And you were talking about, you know, the show, the script, Focus on this, don't worry about all this stuff, don't worry about all this stuff that's going on, just focus on this. And it was kind of, it helped me realize that just, this, just read the script and you'll get the answers, don't try to push it so much, um, what was the question again?

I had like this emotional roller coaster, and I even brought it home with me, until we had the mirror where I could turn it off, but. I don't know what it was, it was me, it was all me, but I was just like, Yeah, I went through an emotional roller coaster, it was just like, I don't even know where things came from when things came up, but. Afterwards, it, it was like I just washed everything out, and I've been so happy, since, and not like I wasn't happy during the show, I was so happy during our rehearsal process, but I was really emotional, I felt like I was crazy, I felt like I was going crazy. And it really, and I thought about love and death, the connection between love and death, because I'm so in love with so many things, but then there's a death of me, a death and rebirth, it felt like a part of me died. But it was good, it was great, I was born again during the process, and I think that's how everything works now, I, I under—I began to understand the connection between love and death, and now I see it everywhere, all the time.

5 December 2014

I think it was the 23rd, and that's when the eclipse happened, early that

morning...I think it was the 23rd, or the 24th, anyway, um, I did a mediation before I came, and I, maybe made a mistake by doing your mediation on my own, and I don't know if I was really prepared for that, I think I opened up too much, and wasn't able to come back down. Um, and it was just like, it, it felt like I had all the answers, and I know I don't, but I, it felt like, 'Oh, my gosh, this is so real!' I. I guess I'm being very vague, um. I felt like I understood everything for the first time, and then I was like, repeating the script, my monologue, in my head, and it was, everything I needed to hear in the moment. It was as if it was written for what I needed to hear in the moment from my higher self or something. Um. Because it was like, 'Everything is gonna be fine, you're gonna be ok', and, and, and maybe that meant something else, but in that moment it was really weird, because I was talking to myself and telling myself that everything was gonna be fine, and, um. It was really crazy. And after that, it was just like 'cause I, I started crying and I was really overwhelmed, and freaked out because it was so intense, and I felt like, I saw all of this light in the room and I felt like I was like outside of myself like sort of looking down, and it was really crazy so I knew that I had to come over here and talk to you, and, because I had like a ringing in my ears telling me that I needed to talk to you, t-right away. Um. And then, you know, I came over and you, we um, I, you helped me get grounded again, and, um, I knew everything was fine, but, but what was really interesting is, I was going over my monologues from the play, in my head, and they were giving me the answers that I needed to hear. And that show was probably one of the best shows, um. Even though I felt like I was not there, I mean it was a little, it was a little intense, like I felt like I wasn't ev-I, I don't remember the show that much because I was like, maybe someone else, or something, um. And there was so much light going on, like around everybody, and like there was light everywhere, and. This probably doesn't make any sense, but. I felt like I had all the answers that night. And. Yeah, it was a, it was a little, it was almost maybe too intense, 'cause I don't really remember, like it was just like, a dream, but a good one, a really good one. I guess I could get more specific. I couldn't see Seth's face at one point, it was, he had like, he was like purple and green and um different colors. Oh, that was the night that I saw the, this like smoke coming off of this plaque that you have on the wall...I couldn't wait to talk to you after the show, I was just like, what is that, am I seeing things? There's like smoky stuff coming off of it, and like, light and um, like an aura that I can see around people but it was on this plaque on the wall.

That was a big moment for me because I, after I talked to you about it, I really, really felt like, maybe I'm not going crazy, maybe, maybe I am, maybe I really can like at least pick up on energy. So that, that was a big moment, where I was just like, Ok, that whole day was, but, but, especially then I was just like, Ok, I can accept this, I shouldn't be afraid of this, let's see what what happens, what I can do. But, oh, another um, um, there's a line where I say, 'You can see things, you can see things all around you, but you won't look', to Seth. And that was like, like, everything is around us, like I, I was talking to him, and to everyone, and to myself. You can see things that are all around us, we have signs all around us all the time, in nature and everything, there are so many patterns, it's almost overwhelming. And that line, I was just like, 'Woah'. And I don't know what you meant like when you wrote that, maybe it was for something else, but that, in that moment, it was just like, I get it, I totally get it.

And even while I was saying it I was just like, 'Oh my god. Oh my god'. I. Wow. Um. And maybe that really connected to people, 'cause I, I could f—uh, I don't know, maybe it was just me, maybe I was the only one that like needed to understand that in that moment, but that was huge for me.

I feel like, I'm getting little things everywhere and it's overwhelming, and I like sometimes I'm just like, 'Stop!' I, 'cause I feel like I'm going crazy, like they put like rocks in my purse, and like, leave things, everything's happening, so many things.

Even like, voices in my head, it's like sometimes I feel like it's different people talking at the same time and telling their stories, and I'm just like, 'Stop!' because they're stupid things sometimes, like just like random, it feels like three different movies at the same time, just blablabla talking talking talking.

You know what I think it is? After the spell...who gave it to me, it like, um, Osh—no, it was Oshun, right? Oshun. I think I got exactly what I wanted, I'm still in the process, but she made me work for it. It didn't come easy I had to work for it. Basically I'm working right now to get to that, that ultimate thing, which was kind of a vague thing that I asked for.

And from the start of the show, like, I started letting go of things that didn't serve me, and I've been still doing that, like, a job, that I hated, let go of it, I just said, 'Nope, that's it', and um, just so many things like from the beginning of that process, so I know it was the, the, the charm. I really do feel like it was, like that started like this whole process of change and um awakening I guess, and uh, yeah.

Oh and this whole process, um uh, it gave my mom the opportunity to open up. 'Cause when she was younger, she, she was so freaked out by all of it, that she was like, 'I don't want any messages,' she was just too scared, 'cause it was too much, and, now that I told her about my experiences, she's been like, 'Oh, ok', and I told her that she can control it. Um. And and now she's like she's so excited to call me and tell me about you know her dreams, and, her dreams are way different than mine, they're so, like, I feel like advanced, like she's like, she goes to different planets and stuff, like she is so like I don't know, I mean, it's totally different, it's awesome that she can talk to me about, and now she's like, she feels comfortable, because of this.

Sometimes I feel like I'm just making it all up, and sometimes I really feel connected to whatever it is, but I don't even know what that is, like what is this?

I had an experience. I felt like, one of my shows, one of the shows, sorry, our shows, um. I felt like I w—I, I felt like I was acting, like I was not there, I was up here somewhere, and the words that were coming out of my mouth, uh, this is how, you know how like when you plug your ears and you can hear your voice inside your head? That's kind of what it felt like, it felt like it was unreal, like it was. I don't know, like, I kept coming in and out of it, I was mostly not there and it was like another voice.

Well, at least now, you know it's, this is working. Even when. I mean, I don't know what your other interviews have been like, but even when people don't really know that it's working, it it it, I think it really is...It's also about the writing, too, your actual plays, so I don't know what it would be like, um, um, I don't know what it would be like, I don't know what it's gonna be like doing another show, a straight play. I don't, I don't know how I feel about it honestly, I don't know if it's like, I really want to do it, but I don't know, like I feel like this is the work I want to do, because the writing is so...it's like, it it seems like it's some—it's like, just messages from Ancestors, our Ancestors, things people need to hear, or maybe it was things that all of us personally needed to hear, and therefore we were sort of healing externally, so I felt like, the r&j/void was an internal, um, healing, like it was, it felt like, like, within all of us, and our relationship to each other, and for us personally, like I felt like it was like a personal thing, and then, um, with *Hotel Athena*, I felt like it was per-internal and external, I felt like it was both, like, it was always like, yeah, it felt like very external, I don't know, maybe it was just, it felt like, it almost felt like it wasn't about me, it was all like (gestures pushing her hands away from herself), but I didn't even know that really during the process and then people talked to me after and they were like, 'I just got out of a relationship, that meant so much, that's what I needed to hear'.

I felt like there was a lot of work going on around. 'Cause I could see light everywhere during the shows. Um, not all, not like, not like the first show, but like, tw-three of the shows, was just like, whoo, crazy, um. And I could like, it felt like, there was other stuff going on, there was a lot of something in the room with us, there was a lot going on.

I had one moment, I think, it was during the show, where I, yeah it was, where I was trying to go to sleep and then I, and like, all of a sudden I, I heard like a ton of voices in the room whispering, like, like, it felt like they were waiting in line. Like, it was weird, but it was during the show, during the show there were so many things happened all at once, it was just really intense, and I know it was because of the meditation, we just opened up to it. Oh! There was one moment. Um. There was that day where I like I was just like totally like, like in space for the whole show, you know I w-like I could hear my voice talking, but. Um, I felt like I was somewhere else. And afterwards when you did the chalk, it was like, 'whoo', like something just went 'whoo'. (Gestures something flying out of her head)

And I think it was one night when, during our meditation we did, you said, the, our spirit guide was on our back, or it was with us, I don't know but it was like all real, everything that happened in meditation was just like, real. I went to space, I had my spirit guide, who was really myself, with like, bigger eyes, I don't know. It was like me, like in meditation like I was looking at myself, but like a, like a, beautiful like goddess with big eyes, interesting, but anyway, maybe maybe it was some, an Ancestor, or something that was in me, but, as soon as you did the chalk at the end it was like, 'whoo', I was like, 'Woah, I'm back'. That's what it felt like.

I remember talking to Heather, and I was like, 'I can't even like talk to people, 'cause I can't even hear myself talk', like, I would, and the whole show was like that. It was very out of body feeling, but. And the the other shows, I had moments like that but I would come in and out, it was like, 'whoo', like in and out in and out, like I re-lines that I felt like I was out of body and then I came in and I was

like acting. You know, like. It didn't really feel natural, because I would like start thinking about it, but there was one show where I was like, the whole show was just like that, I think two shows actually, the show af-before that, there was three shows in a row, so whatever came before the 23rd and after, were like the most intense. And then after that I was like, it was like a little bit too much, so I said, 'Ok I want to come back, I want to be more grounded'. So. After that I was a little bit more in control, I think, for the last show.

Even watching the show every time I always feel like I'm in a trance, uh, with watching everyone's monologue, I'm always like, one show especially I was just starting I couldn't stop staring at everyone. Um. But yeah, yeah, it's all a spell.

It's funny, 'cause, yeah, like I ha-I have both feeling, like I want to go there, and then I get like a little too close, and then I retract, but I want to, like part of me wants to, like, when you gave me the hat, I w-I meditate with the hat and then a part of me wanted to meditate without the hat, I want that, and crave it, but then I'm afraid of it so, I don't know. I think I, it's a step by step process.

SETH

28 October 2013

It was, I felt, I didn't, ok, I'm gonna say that I didn't get anything, but I'm not gonna say that I didn't go anywhere. It was, because, when you, you did the whole walk through thing, I I kind of had different thoughts about that, and I went down the hole, and then I just kind of got locked in black. I don't remember anything until you said, you you start coming, the darkness lights up and that's when like like (snaps) clicked back on and it's like (hums) wooo, I was, I wasn't-I wasn't here basically, and I don't, something was locked, and I don't know what it is, but I do want to go back. Like, I don't know, something, there was some lack of consciousness, or, I don't know. Something to explore...Like it felt like whatever was there would be a dream and that my brain isn't telling me what it was, it's locking it off.

I went down one hole and came out another.

2 December 2013

No, I, I think it's, what I don't, it, the thou-the thoughts I have usually during the days that the mirror you gave us, that you know, well I carry around, even when it's not in my pocket, this pocket, in fact it's never left these jeans. It's, it's a reminder, 'cause I'll always go into my pockets to find something and it's there, and I go, 'Oh', and I have to take a second, just to think about it, and I always rub it between, between the thumb and the finger and it's kind of a, I don't look at it, I always just touch it, it's just kind of a to know that it's right there, and then I think back to process of where it really is, when we do it, or what the thought is at that moment, or how, how, what does it mean that the mirror was touched this particular time, and that, how close can you get to it without actually looking at it, there, there's some kind of power held into it, and you put it there, and there,

there's things to discover that you don't put there, and that's going back to the, to the cave into the to the depths and finding The Mirror.

20 January 2014

It was, it seemed like it had different kind of tiers. Where the, the first tier was I didn't really understand, feel, or experience anything, I was just trying to get the lines down, or the acting. The second tier was kind of a form of discovery, looking into things that you didn't look into, that I didn't look into before, or even consider. The final, the last tier was just experience, riding it through, that was through the performances that we did.

ME: Did you ever feel as though you were entering an ASC?

SETH: There was a few. Not every single time it happened, but there was a few times, uh, that, it would almost be like a dream. We would go into it, and then I would wake up four hours later.

ME: Ok, yeah, yeah, ok. Was it like, so it was like that, each of those times? Was it like going into a dream and then waking up?

SETH: There was, I think, three performance, and one rehearsal that was like that.

ME: Oh during the performances?

SETH: Yeah.

ME: Really?

SETH: Mm hm.

ME: That you didn't remember the performance at all?

SETH: Not, not much. Like, I could remember it right then, but come time the next, the next day, I couldn't, I wouldn't have very much at all.

ME: Uh-huh.

SETH: Like it would just be like, Oh yeah, we did a show yesterday, but, I'll just do the same thing that I did yesterday. But it wouldn't be as clear, it wouldn't be so, uh, it wouldn't be so clear to me, I couldn't think back like I couldn't think like anything else I did yesterday. Things were brand new more often than they should have been. That's what I'm trying to say.

ME: Describe in terms of senses.

Mostly hearing. The beginning of the whole, the whole rehearsals, there was, I guess I wasn't listening as much. And finally when it came to just sit down and we were focusing I'd started to listen more, and different words would pop up, and different things would would hit hit something on me each night. This would make sense because of this, but then the next night it wouldn't. And these words would make more sense to me and affect me that way, so it would almost be, jumping on different platforms each night.

Juliet would say things, uh, it was in her first monologue, she would say something about string, say something about untangling elflocks, things like that. It was mostly in her monologues. And then after her it was, um, Heather's monologues, where she was saying, 'I'm going to untie myself'. It began to be anyone who said anything about untying or getting loose. That's what, that's what most popped out, most of the time. Mostly because Mercutio would say, 'The', um, what is it, 'the elflocks which are baked in foul, sluttish hairs which, once untangled, much misfortune bodes', so like untangling was a bad word for me.

Like, I didn't like it, it wasn't, things were meant to be tangled or not tangled, not anything in between.

ME: Did they seem significantly different than other acting exercises?

SETH: Yes. Absolutely. Like, I, I mean, I've never done anything like that and now when I try to get into character, I have to do some form of it. Not that like I need to, but I feel more comfortable doing it.

It's, for me I always felt like putting myself to rest while letting something else take over. You were letting everything else of yourself, much like anyone would do walking into a building now, there's that five, ten minutes to put everything to rest and shine a new light.

After it was edited, I had a hard time remembering what we talked about that time, or like how the interview went specifically, I could only remember what the video said. And with some content, with either one story, like I felt like that kind of opened up ourselves as people, where the characters didn't.

ME: Did it feel like you were manipulation by me? The video?

SETH: I never felt that way, I just felt kind of more led, that you'd put like a buoy in dark water, and we would hit those, kind of things, like that's how I felt rather than manipulated. 'Cause I was kind of being lead through the dark, I've never done anything like that.

You mold yourself. You make yourself what you are, and so when it becomes your desires and obsessions, you kind of make to something that, what you desire also desires, if that makes sense. You become the desire of what you desire. That's how I feel like it's, pre-molded my world.

That was my favorite part, was when we just had the flashlights, or small lights, and I would pay attention even closer, and uh there was the time we were dancing and I had the veil over, I would actually look at the audience. Yeah, so I was paying attention to how they would react to that, because that was the one moment I really wanted to see what they would do. They didn't do anything, they just watched. And that's why, I don't think they also never influenced anything.

SETH: For the movements and such I was out of my head but still in my body. If that makes any sense. I wasn't in my head, I was trying to get the in all the muscles, trying to get the movement right. So I wasn't there but I was still there, still paying attention.

ME: And it's like maybe you had another consciousness looking at the audience at the same time?

SETH: Flipped a switch, yeah.

I had to kind of just let him take control, 'cause if I tried saying like, 'What's your reason?' he wouldn't tell me. So I'd just like be kind of like all right. That's how I felt, it was like Take Over. If you're gonna feel one way and not, not really make me understand, let it go.

After the whole thing you'd get back to being back in your own head, you'd kind of start to remember easier. Which was interesting. Like I started feeling you know greater about some things, feeling great when I go back onto the train.

ME: How would you define spell?

SETH: Influence, really. 'Cause I'm still thinking I'm cursed by Macbeth, but I'm also thinking that since it's in my head, I've become careless, or I've been influenced to become a little bit more reckless towards almost risking my life, like biking, and there was a few crashes, where like it could have been, but like no, but I blame Macbeth and that's been my justification, so I would say influence. That's what a spell would be.

ME: Did you feel like you were under a spell during this project?

SETH: Not every time. There was I think, during the performances, really, that was it. I think during rehearsals I was too tense to kind of let loose about it, and I was focusing more on the lines, but when the performances came, then that influence came.

In the th—that uh the time where we would go to the mirror, and switch bodies, that was the influence, it was kind of decompressing yourself and giving up this space for something else, that's what the influence was. So you kind of felt it more physically and emotionally, rather than personally, if that makes any sense. You would flip back, you would kind of feel remnants of desires and things that they would have, and you would feel your own desires greater. That's what I'm thinking the influence was.

I was more frustrated than anything, There was like a brief moment of frustration and then I would get into it, and it would almost be like, in a dream you open up a door but when you wake up it's closed, but you know that you've let something in, so it's there and it slowly becomes present.

ME: How would you define trance?

SETH: The space in between sleeping and consciousness, or sleep and awake, but complete consciousness. It's probably even more, it's purer consciousness.

ME: Have you ever been in a trance before?

SETH: Not that I, not that I know. I've never sat down to get into trance.

ME: Did you feel like you were during this project?

SETH: Given there were a few times, that, no, but there were more times that, yes, mostly during the performances. Usually with the influence of the spell it would be mo-present, like I'd feel like it would be present, that's when the trance would stay.

ME: The difference between the two may be great or maybe slight, and I think it probably varies—

SETH: —For me it seemed slight, like there wasn't one without the other.

I felt like there was something in the room but never anything such as an entity. And there was the character in my head, from there influencing, but it never felt like it was another person.

ME: When did these trances happen during the performances?

SETH: It was when Juliet spoke alone and when Romeo and Roslyn spoke. That's when I felt like the most, when I wouldn't speak, those times.

ME: But you weren't even in the scene.

SETH: No.

ME: Oh, really.

SETH: I would just hear it, listen to it.

ME: Wow, ok.

SETH: And usually, what I would try to do, too, is find something within the vicinity that would reflect that, and stare at it, and not, not move from that.

Sometimes I would look at Juliet while Roslyn and Romeo were talking, sometimes I would look at Romeo while Juliet was talking. Or I would look at the mirror in my and or the light in my hand, or the lighter or her mirror when she would stare in her mirror.

4 September 2014

This time it felt, I would definitely say, some kind of magic happened, some kind of spell happened, because a lot of times, it was just off (snaps his fingers by his head), I was off, and the play's on. And a lot of times it was on-off, and I was like what what what did I do? What did I just d—oh! Ok, the next scene. And it felt very spell-like because this was the first time I could safely say that nothing of my own brain was—it was like that Sponge Bob episode? Where he becomes the waiter and just deletes everything out of his brain. It felt like for whatever amount of time, brain off, that's all you knew was the character. 'Cause I feel like Void I thought too much about it, where this one it was, Hey read—do this, and I had to try to not do that and, spit it out, yeah it felt very spell-like.

I mean, I felt like with Romeo and Juliet those choices were very conscious and it was me and I don't feel like (unintelligible) where *endofplay* it was almost like I don't know spur of the moment, like I wouldn't really just think I would just do. Like Oh this would happen now. This happened now you gotta do that. I didn't even think about it. Oh this is what fits this fits with that, I wasn't—I really was not thinking, kind of just let something take control. It felt, I was thinking, it felt kind of like *romeo&juliet/VOID* was inviting a portal in to our world, where *endofplay* for me felt like out into that portal. It was going out rather than in.

I'm trying to think hard about it, I can't really find the right words, but being in a trance I feel like is another form of second nature, where in average thought, *a* becomes *b* because of *c*, and this is the only way I can make it make sense in my head, whereas in second nature is *a*, *b* then *c*. In a trance *a* is *c*, for me. There is no middle ground at all kind of, moves together and becomes simple? there's no thought there, yeah, you kind of just, let things happen, go somewhere where you haven't been before, but you're always there. That's what a trance is like for me.

12 December 2014

I got what I was looking for late, or early, before I got the charm. I don't think it was because, it's because I asked for it, I think something else happened in my life, and then I got the charm and, I wasn't sure what I got but I know that something else changed and, I don't know, like not like a great change, just kind

of like a lens or an air, a feeling, very subtle, not like a great awakening, but when I got the charm it wasn't exactly what I asked for, because I already had it.

It wasn't building a character normal, normally, like I normally do. Instead of building this character from, wherever, from a story, it was a semblance of memory. I would go in each scene, it was me looking back into memories of when something or an experience might have happened. Like it was more like a, I wouldn't—I would say imitation of what these memories were for me, that's how, that was the way I think I'd go back and that's the only way it made sense. Like how something spoke to me that this character was more yourself than anything, I mean not like literally yourself, like you went through this, but it's more reflected easier upon yourself if you brought it on to your own memories and brought it into this, how the play went and. Like, own memories applied to this, this world, it wasn't Mercutio character where you can kind of characterize some things or think of what this person might be or, Dog as well what the character is, even if it is just a dog. 'Cause I couldn't think back and as memories of a dog, or I couldn't think back as actual memories of Mercutio or any character. But with this, it was easy to do that, because I mean in a way I felt like it was about memory. Rather fragmented or put together.

ME: Did you feel like you were more present than usual?

SETH: Yes. Absolutely. However, uh, like I was still in the like, in trance, like it still felt the same depths, like it was just a different way of deep sea diving.

SETH: If it was an Ancestor that was here, it was one that I didn't know. I did not recognize and I wasn't familiar with. And it might as well have been not related to me in any way. So it felt, I mean I kind of gave in to the void, I would, I would call that. To, I gave myself to that, saying, 'You choose'. Like. Someone who sees this, I kind of like, I spun the wheel and it landed on the right, right place saying like, 'Ok I've I've been through this or like, I know what's going on', rather it was tied directly to me, 'cause that's who I called out to in the trance I guess. You could say that.

ME: But did you feel like something answered?

SETH: Yes, I would s—in—because, uh, it made so, memories became so easy. And there was never, I mean the only struggle was kind of being alone for ten minutes to just focus on a monologue to perform in more actor—y, like, 'Ah I've got to go into my world', and go into that. But once I stepped into it, it almost felt like as if every preparation I had was thrown away and I gave myself to a moment. Or, uh, a spirit present in the room, and it just lent to that, and it really depended on who was there, and how maybe the meditation to begin with went.

ME: Did you have the experience, with *Hotel Athena*, where you didn't remember performing, like the other projects?

SETH: It was different this time. I think the only time where I felt like I didn't know what I did was more so with Liana jumping into a scene and like somehow it worked out. Rather I did something different or she did something different. And maybe at the time it was, was irritating in the scene, or like it was so completely different, 'cause and also like the space would change, sometimes people would sit in our scenes and we would have to like adapt to it. And it would just be impossible to imitate, to do again, like if it worked out or didn't. So like it would almost be like, 'What did we do?' kind of thing. I didn't really forget that

we what I go so deep and to forget what the scene was or what did I do but really what we did, like wha—what exactly was the piece. 'Cause we would also imitate things, sometimes we would bring a coffee or I would sit closer at times, or we would stare longer and try to change things, but those variables never worked out the same way. Every performance was always very different. See that's what was so, changed it up for me. It was, a really like kind of like a roll of the dice. Tonight is seven, great. Tonight is four, why? There's three dice there and I got four.

So, yeah, I guess it's much—not so much as mind lo—like memory or, losing control of your mind, but just kind of allowing your movement and emotions to fly like a kite. Blow in the wind and that wind is the character.

JAMIE

12 February 2013

I think it's working pretty well for me. If nothing else, it's formally, it's almost a way to like formally begin, to like take a step in your mind of like, 'Ok, I'm gonna do this now, I'm gonna be this way now'. I think it's helpful in that way to like name it and actually have an action that is repeated, that like gets you, me into the play.

25 January 2014

I felt like drawing that distinction between myself and then the work was, just how clear that was the entire time, that really helped me feel safe to, you know, try things and do things and, whatever, I never felt worried about getting into the meditation, like, I never worried about losing myself in that.

I can. I think. I think there was one time during rehearsal, but really, I think the only time that it really, that I felt like I was entering an altered state of consciousness was during one of the performances.

There was a moment, um, I was not in the scene that was happening. I was watching Seth do something. It was either, I believe it was the scene where Mercutio was tying Juliet, the scene where I was just watching them do that, I felt like, I think, everything just got really heightened, and I felt bigger if that makes sense. And I was like really present, like seriously present, you know, some—I felt like, this is funny but you know your peripheral—especially since I don't wear my glasses in the performance, I could see everything like clearly, everything was like crystal clear and, yeah, I was really there. So I think it was an altered state in just how focused I was especially for not being in the scene, I mean obviously I was on stage the whole time, but, just watching other people do something just, I don't know, it was cool.

ME: Were the exercises significantly different than others you have done?

JAMIE: Yes. I feel like it is more effective, because you're not, I think, this work, I like it a lot, because it allows the character to be what it is without me imposing anything on it, as opposed to, you know, sitting down and writing out your back story, like, where are you coming from where are you going what's your middle

name where are your parents from, you know, that kind of information, that doesn't necessarily form, inform how you're going to, what you're going to do on stage. I mean, yeah, that is all necessary information, but, through the meditation stuff, I found that meeting, meeting the character without imposing anything on it, allowed it to come to life by itself. And I mean, and that's me. It's like sort of not limiting my creativity by setting limits to it. And a lot of my preconceived ideas about Roslyn before we actually started working were just like, 'Oh no, that was wrong!' It's like, 'No, she's not sad at all', I mean, she's kind of sad but, that's not like what's driving her at all, and I came to that realization just by meeting her within myself. So I felt like really I think unbound is the best word, the character was a thing and I just met it, and started working with it. As opposed to like, 'This is how you're going to behave, and this is what you're going to do, and this is how I'm going to say this line'. it felt more organic and creative in that way and I liked that a lot.

It's something about telling it live vs. telling it on video, like, knowing that I won't be able to openly communicate that story...that I won't be able to see the other person's reaction and like communicate with them about it. It just is what it is and they're gonna take from it whatever they want. So, I, I think I did feel more vulnerable in the video vs. live—any time during the live performance. Which was kind of funny, I was just like, 'Oh god here we go again!'

A spell is, um, well this is how I, I approached it in the play since I was performing I don't know casting spells on others during the play, um, I it I was um, through the use of objects or liquids or whatever, I was casting an energy that I wanted them to have from myself onto them, so I was imposing a state or desire, whatever. I was imposing a way of behaving onto another person.

A trance is, well I think a lot of people behave differently while in a trance, but while I am personally in a trance, it's subjective. Um it's going inside of myself, so, mo—like right now, I'm pretty outside of myself, I mean, well I'm thinking about being inside myself so that's kind of complicated, but I mean I'm talking to you, and I'm outside with my eyes open, and whatever. But, a trance is more focusing inward and you kind of lose what's going on around me. So while I am still conscious of who I am and like yes I'm sitting in this room and I can feel my body, I'm not focused on that and that kind of disappears and I'm focused on things that are going on like mentally and emotionally and spiritually, just focusing inside instead of all the things that are going on outside.

There was that one time you had to go get Elli, and we had to lead ourselves to go down into the cave with the, and meet the character and talk to them, I think. when I was self-guiding that, I felt like that was when I was most in a trance, when I was doing—which is kind of weird, because usually I'm like, 'Oh, yeah, I need somebody to guide me through this stuff, I don't concentrate very well and I'm all over the place'. That was one of the most powerful encounters I had and I was most lost in that moment.

Rather than focus on like pleasing the play in that moment, I felt like I was really letting it happen. The one where Seth was, um, the scene between Mercutio and Juliet. I think that scene was when I felt like I was most in a trance, because I wasn't, um, forgive me, I don't know all the psychological terminology, but there

wasn't that, like, the voice in my head telling me like, 'Oh, don't mess this up', like, 'Oh, what's your next line, what's the next thing?' that was quiet. Which i don't really experience ever onstage. So that was cool.

ME: Have you ever imagined that your own thoughts and feelings could manipulate others? In life as well as in performance.

JAMIE: Without speaking them?

ME: Yeah.

JAMIE: So, have I ever thought that, like, uh, me wishing something on someone else might work? (Pause, she laughs.) This is horrible, but you know when I, yeah, I'm kind of, I get angry when I drive. I'm kind of an angry driver. And I kind of like think at people, like, 'I hope you have a horrible day now'. And I think that works. (Laughter.) Or if somebody's like really rude to the waiter, I just like dart a look at them and I'm like, 'I hope you can't sleep tonight'. Like something like horrible things like that. That's so mean, I can't believe that I do that now that I think about it.

ME: Inversely, then, do you think that other people can do that to you?

JAMIE: I want to say no, but I think the truth is yes. I think a lot of that just goes through like body language and communication and things. Yeah, in thinking about it from the other side, yeah, it's really easy to let other people's states fall onto me.

But it seems to me that if you just stand two people next to each other, that they're going to catch each other—whichever energy is strongest. Like just not saying anything, just looking at each other, I mean something happens. Yeah, I did do this, I did this at um, when I went up to that voice congruence in Canada, there was this whole like for like five minutes or some crazy, unheard-of time, we just stood there completely silent making eye contact, and it was like one of the most powerful encounters I've ever had, and like nothing actually happened—actually happened. Like nobody saying anything, nobody was using standard modes of communication, but it was somehow really powerful just because it was a transfer of energy and states onto each other, and I think, charging objects with that like in terms of rehearsal and performance, it's the same way that there are psychological areas, you know? it's like, 'Don't sit in my chair, that's my chair, onstage, don't sit in my chair'.

4 September 2014

JAMIE: In that I didn't feel like um I was under a spell so much or in a trance, as I did in *romeo&juliet*, um, that one felt a lot more spiritual and magical in a way, whereas I think maybe prefacing, like starting off the rehearsal process for *end of play* with, 'This one is going to be a lot more psychological', may have I don't know even started me out in like a different mindset. Um. so I did, I did, yeah, I just, completely agree with Heather, I did feel like I was in another state of consciousness, but it wasn't, it was like, I don't know, like normal, actor other state of consciousness, like the character as opposed to like, something magical, in like, the way that—

HEATHER: —It's almost something technical took over versus something ethereal.

JAMIE: Yeah, yeah, that's right, that's what I was trying to say. Good job with words.

JAMIE: I guess the on/off switch was the same for me both times, but the quality of the on was changed for me it was more, in *endofplay* it was more um, I don't know I think just altogether conscious and aware. Like, *romeo&juliet*, sometimes I wouldn't really know what I was saying or why I was saying it that was, but in this one I, I was more aware, like—

HEATHER:—Were you more in control where you can adjust making the choices (unintelligible)

JAMIE: I think more often than I was in *romeo&juliet*.

I think the most I've felt like I was in a trance would be during the meditations before rehearsal. Um. The exercise that we do where we're meditating and we step out of our bodies, and go meet another aspect of ourselves and bring that aspect of ourselves back. Um, that exercise is always very I don't know vivid for me and I almost, I do forget that I'm sitting in a, in a room occasionally I mean not always I mean everybody gets distracted, but, um. I don't know it just feels, yeah I think that's what it feels like for me, to be in a trance, is like, my spirit has stepped out of my body and is doing something else than what my body is doing. Be that on stage, more, I felt like this more in *romeo&juliet* which I described in a previous one of these presentations, but. (Laughter).

21 November 2014

It wasn't what I was expecting it to be either. Not in a way that was bad. When we started the project, it sounded like we were, um, going to, so the last one was really psychoanalytical you know, and then this one was gonna be a lot more like meditation driven. And while I felt that it was, I felt like I didn't have a chance to go as far, because I was only meeting this—I only met that person like six times before I was like (claps) doing it.

I felt like even in *endofplay*, and—which was not a really heavy meditation experience, but certainly with *romeo&juliet*/*VOID*, there was a much deeper experience with those two, with meeting the other self in the meditation, whereas in *Athena*, I don't want to say that it didn't work, because it did, like the practice was still happening, I just was not as aware, I just didn't know that person as well. So while I was working with them, and they were inhabiting me, or you know, I mean, that consciousness shift happened, I wasn't like, um, I don't know how to phrase it, as completely like cognizant of what that person was all about and doing. Which I think probably suited the role I was playing, which was like, um, this woman who was getting herself all dolled up to go out, and then, I mean because there was some sort of loss or breakup or she lost a lover, and then she just gets massively, massively drunk and passes out and starts mumbling about things, um, and she's just stuck in that loop, where like, every time she gets herself ready to go out, she just drinks and drinks and drinks and drinks herself into oblivion, um. And I get, uh. That person isn't super-aware of their, of her, like the consequences of her actions, but I mean like meta, she is, because she knows that she's there, but, she can't help it, like that's just what she's destined to do forever, to show people what not to do.

Yeah, I think the three of us were, the Other, in this one. I feel like I'm typically playing that role in your shows and I actually really love it, but um. We did feel like the Other, we weren't on the same, I mean, we were on the same plane but we were not the same time of being as the rest of the characters were. We felt less mortal than they did.

I think *romeo&juliet* was like, the best, I don't have a better word, the best, it worked the best, the method, I've, like. Maybe it was because it was the first time, and that it was new, and that I was like, 'Holy shit this really works', like, 'Oh my god, this really works'. So that may be part of the reason where I think that process like really, really took me somewhere and like really, really made *duende* happen in the room, like it's undeniable, um. But I mean, the, the diff--and then after that *endofplay*, there was a different focus, so. That worked as well but it was just different, and intentionally so, which was fine, but I--yeah, I think. Doing it every single, like doing that practice, that work every day, when it's guided, yeah, like I can use my mirror and all that, but it's different than the guided meditation, like, to go transport your consciousness and talk to that person, it's a different experience doing that and getting to know that person. In a structured way than like, blowing on the mirror and memorizing your lines with that person helping you doing it, they're two different ex--so while I can encounter that side every day of like discovering that character on my own, I think it's more helpful when it's in rehearsal with other people, like, I think the more structure there is, and guidance, it's more effective.

ME: But then, but then it's also my job to like, at the--'cause it seems like the energy is there, is to teach you how to access that energy. You know. But I mean, it seems like most--but I think that's really--like, what I'm getting from all of this is that that's really what an actor does anyway.

JAMIE: It is.

ME: And that this is kind of like a metaphor for actors' work.

JAMIE: Yeah. And actors do really well with metaphors. Good ones, I think. So.

Yeah, this shit just really, it's really, really helpful. It's like a process that I just wanna do forever. It just does it, it just, like (snaps), gets you there. Not you.

Metaphorical you. Me, me, it gets me there. It's just like (snaps), 'Yep, that's what I wanna do, that's who this person is, this is how I'm saying these lines, this is what I'm gonna do'. No pressure on me, either. It's like completely magical.

ME: I've had this experience where I'm very aware of it happening at the same time while it's happening. Um--

JAMIE: --That's, what's happening here.

ME: Like with all of them or for the last one?

JAMIE: I think with all of them.

ME: Yeah, ok.

JAMIE: And not to discredit it because that, I think that type of it is essential for the actor's work. You, you, I mean there's so many other people around, I mean unless you're doing a one-man, one-woman show there's so many other people around you that are depending on you and relying on you to be like coherent of the situation. I mean, all of you are driving the bus. so. The show is the bus. So you're driving the bus and if one of you just loses it, or loses like the coherent part of yourself where you're like, 'I have to move that chair', I think that, while it would be, certainly an intriguing performance to watch, I don't think, I mean, like,

greater levels of possession would be useful for me personally. But that, like that level that you're like the bottom tier or whatever, is extremely useful, because while I'm aware that that is happening, it's also happening I'm still there I'm just not in the way of the performance, so I'm like watching it and I'm seeing the thing that I'm doing and there's a still a part of me that remembers to turn the light off at the right point.

ME: Describe the narrative in your head while this was going on.

JAMIE: Certainly with *romeo&juliet* it was the character, and my ego was watching, which was bizarre, in like a really wonderful way, 'cause I felt like that was like, this is so dumb, that was like my breakthrough, my breakout. I felt like that sho—that performance, that process was like (explosion sounds) like worlds opened for me with that one, um. The last two was more like half and half. Athena I felt like the most ego was in control. I think just because I didn't have enough time to, I dunno, maybe I just ha—I, I mean, no I do I certainly do, I do have like a controlling exact type of like organized personality, like I need to know what's gonna happen—

ME: —The Virgo thing.

JAMIE: Yeah, it's a lot. Um. With Roslyn, when I was working on Roslyn, I had enough time to just (sings) let it go, let it go, and you know, and not even reign it back in, but like, know where it was going, and without knowing exactly what was gonna happen, I was like comfortable enough to let it, Roslyn do that. With *endofplay* I don't really remember, um. I think like the added stress of trying to work with space and filling other production type roles in that one, kind of hindered a little bit, but not, not really so I would say that that one was about half and half. And then Athena was almost entirely me.

JAMIE: The very last monologue I had in Athena, where it's just like you're totally and completely gone, I realized like my ego wasn't thinking about—so I mean, it was really, really very dual at that moment. I wasn't thinking about what I was saying at all, I was thinking, like, completely about—I was—my eyes were closed, so my ego was completely concentrating on Steve, like, 'Is he gonna pick me up? Is he gonna remember to bring my shoes?' but at the same time, like, the other, like, the posses—the character, was the one doing the scene. And I—I think that just struck me, was that I was never thinking about that, actually acting, or speaking the lines from that scene at all. That was just like going and I was going something else, I was like, 'I really hope Steve remembers my shoes', like, 'I really hope he doesn't leave any glass bottles on the floor that are gonna break'. So that's like totally and completely me, but then I was like, that was totally dual because I was also doing a scene. Like I wasn't saying, 'Is Steve gonna remember to get my shoes?' Which probably a lot of people would say is bad.

ME: Why they say it's bad?

JAMIE: Because you kn—I mean, you know, Stanislavsky says that 'you should, whatever, whatever, you should be concentrating on the scene', but I just totally wasn't. (Laughs) I was like, 'Ok Beth is gonna say pink and blue twice, ok she said it twice, ok now I'm gonna start saying my lines, ok so I, man, I really, I really hope that Steve remembers that this is the line, ok here comes the line where he's supposed to pick me up and we're supposed to leave'.

And those are the types of moments where you're like, 'Oh, shit, I just wasn't paying, like, was that any good, does anybody like, uh, did I totally fuck that

monologue up?' but I mean, it's almost like those are the ones that work the best, where you're just saying the words. Instead of thinking about how you should say the words. 'Cause I mean, very seldom in like actual conversation are you thinking about how you should say the words. You're thinking, well, I mean, it's just entirely different, when you've memorized something and you need to say it, part of the. I don't even know if this is right, but I feel like, part of the, part of the thing that makes it honest is not thinking too much about how you're saying it. Which is like the whole thing with like Steve is always talking to us about that work he does with targets or whatever. Thinking about what you want instead of how to say the phrase that is gonna get you what you want, which is like objective work and stuff like that, which is the same thing but in a totally different practice. So that's a way to occupy you're brain as well then. Thinking about like, 'I want you to leave'. Instead of thinking about how you should sound when you say some really like hateful comment, hateful line of dialogue I mean.

While you're in it, while you're doing the process it's like, I think the meditation helps me access like a more instinctual, like, you know, I (unintelligible) animal part of myself, where instincts are like, emotional instincts are running ahead of my brain, my ego, the part of me that is aware of what the lines are sounding like, although that is certainly playing, I mean, I'm aware of it after it happens.

That scene was really puzzling me until I suddenly said the line a different way.

Especially first read throughs of your work, it's just like, 'I have no fucking idea what this means'. And you really have to like, you really need to sit with it, and live in it, and make it mean something, and I mean, I think, not that it doesn't already mean something, but it takes like work and practice and process to like inhabit that place and then be able to communicate to others what it, what the play is.

(R&J) It wasn't fragmented the way that, um, *endofplay* or *Hotel Athena* are fragmented, they're very, the, both of those shows are, that's something I didn't realize, both of those shows are really episodic, and *romeo&juliet* is not. I mean, people, people might think that it is, but it wasn't for me. There was, it was, it wasn't linear by any means, but there was, it felt like, though it was otherworldly and outside of time, it felt like real time. Like, I had feelings and things to do throughout. And maybe part of it was that we were onstage the whole time too.

Being the other, I didn't have to worry about the implications of me being aware of what everyone else was doing. I thought that that helped that character particularly, being what she was, in our iteration of the show. So I think that might have contributed to the level of possession or, yeah, the level of possession that that show was for, I would venture to say, all of us.

There's, I mean, while *endofplay* had an arc as well, it was like, it was almost like, not really, the movie *Memento*, but sort of, where you had to like, 'Ok, this is the point in their relationship that I am now', and just like get there. Which this process is a very useful tool to help me just, 'Ok this is what is going on right now, this is where I need to be, this is where I need to get'. But practicing like an emotional, I don't know if that's right, but, whatever, like a timeline, like an arc that you can follow, that was the way with Roslyn, that will absolutely be the way

with Blanche, it's easier, it's just easier theatre to do for me anyway, theatre that is more, um, I don't know, linear in time like, you can pinpoint, like, 'This, this scene made me feel this way', and things that build that way, rather than like, 'Ok, here's an episode, here's an episode, here's an episode', and just getting to that place, rather than letting things, this is what I'm, this is what I'm trying to say this whole time, rather than, like, something on stage, during a performance, that another actor did, made me feel this way, and then I'm going to be feeling, this is what I'm trying to get, so I'm going to do this thing and then I'm going to feel this way about whatever happens next, so it's gonna be a lot more, um, acting and reacting, which I think this work, the process, really helps with, for *romeo&juliet*, which is another thing worth saying about Athena, is that I didn't interact with anyone, so it was just a completely different experience. Yeah, I sort of, I looked at Beth one time, and I had a monologue, I had one monologue with the two of them, but it was not interacting, I was interacting with the audience sort of for that, so it wasn't like, having another person doing the same work, like acting, with you, is, it's just helpful, it's a more enjoyable experience for me, working with other people, doing the same things.

ME: (discussing the charm) Like you have your heart's desire, but what's your heart's desire doesn't really, is not really why you're there.

JAMIE: Yeah, yeah, and it's, we're not aware of like, the yeah I mean, face value, we want this thing, but I mean, 'No, this, this is what's actually now for you', like is that what you're saying?

ME: Yeah. Yeah. Did that, and without being specific at all what you asked for and things like that, did that happen with this last one?

JAMIE: Yes. it did. Period.

Several things have happened, that have, I mean, I'm not just like magically better, but. Which is fine, I wasn't really expecting that either but I just didn't know where to start, I didn't understand how to. Ever. Help myself. So. And I feel like. I have an idea of how to help myself.

HEATHER

2 December 2013

Um, for me, I think I identify most along the lines with what Jamie was saying, um. Um. Using it as, uh, as um, a gateway, as a portal between the two worlds is very helpful for me, because for me as a performer that line gets very blurry and characters seep into real life and I don't have a really great definition of what's real and what's not, so um the separation between the two worlds and letting go is a lot easier. Um, and it's a, it's very helpful for me to have a physical place to store that. It's also been interesting for me as a performer I think the hardest thing during the process is not overanalyzing and not worrying and to be able to trust yourself and your instincts, and there's something in the mindset that switches when you have a physical object to put all of that into. It's easier for me to let go quicker.

31 January 2014

I've never done those specific sets of things but they're not vastly different from the world of anything I've ever done before. I've done a lot of weird things though. Well, I have.

You can always feel an energy from an audience, especially when they're so close to you, and I think the best example for that is um the Thursday when the whole theater company came and there was like twelve, fourteen people in your living room, and they were really vocal and laughing a lot and you could tell they were actively engaged in the show, and the Friday night after there were I think six people, five people and they were still completely engaged, but it was an internal, reflective audience, so you could feel that they were with you but there wasn't that outpouring of energy that the audience the night before had. And that happens I think a lot in theatre, especially between like a Saturday night and a Sunday. (Interruption) So a show's gonna feel different when you're being supplemented by all the extra energy coming to you, um, and the immediate difference the next night, maybe the show's even stronger but you don't get the same rush, because you're just putting things out and it's getting absorbed versus getting reciprocated, so you feel complete. You know, it does, it doesn't mean it's a better or a worse show, but it's a different experience just because of what you're feeling onstage. And the same with an actor um especially if you, even if you don't have lines or interactions with someone, in any setting, but again because we're performing in such a small space, in such close proximity, if somebody's stayed up all night, or come in tired, or had a really good day and overly excited, anytime there's a shift in the levels of what's happening around you, you're gonna feel it, um and it doesn't mean that's gonna affect your performance 'cause that's up to you, to how you choose to let it, but, I think, especially when people are low it's the hardest because there's this need to kind of make up for it, pull people back up to a pace or cues or even just like the vibrancy of what the show is, what you're used to.

The, I think any goal is to get, for me anyways is to get completely lost in a character, but there's a kind of duality of consciousness where um you give ninety percent of yourself over to the moment, what's happening right now, but there still has to be that ten percent for safety that knows, you know, uh, 'Oh, I'm tied to this chair, so I can't just go leaping across the room if I want to'.

In terms of theatre, I, like I said, I didn't have, in, this kind of thing has been happening to me since I started performing. Um. I've been dancing since I was four and in the beginning it just used to be like, that thing that was really fun, and I didn't think for five minutes when I was performing, and got this rush of adrenaline and then later on could tie it together with, it's a live crowd of people, and not just an egoistic thing of I like to be in front of people, but because there's that exchange that's happening between you and other people in a room. Um, and then, performing in terms of inhabiting a character, I knew when things, I thought of it in terms of like being on or being off. You know, if I was thinking a lot, I didn't know what it was that felt right but I knew that something would click, and then I would be in the spot, and this is the spot that the character was in now, I can verbalize it as: oh, this vibration of this energy of this person who has these defined traits or this speech pattern or whatever, this is how they interact. And

now I know that that's giving into a role and that's what I want, what I strive for, but before, and again it's the same thing, like my head goes quiet. And it's in an altered state but I didn't know what that was. So it was a thing that I tried to let go into. And then in terms of personal life, when I had big energetic shifts, in meditation or getting hit by the car or in intimate experiences, things like that, they happen so quickly and so suddenly in the beginning that it wasn't a choice, or something to fight, it was just like (sound effect) there. And then I would learn about what that was and what was happening and like, 'Oh, no, no, I wanna go there'. So I never had, I was never scared of it, because I never had the time to be, in those big moments, and things always happened in big moments for me.

Plus I like it. It's just fun when like something else takes you over for awhile, and I get little goosebumps. 'Cause it's like a surge of different energy, and it feels, well it's not always powerful but it's like electric, you know, living in your skin in a different way? or above? and being able to like be there but also see everything else at the same time? It's great.

The second weekend of the show um when i was laying on the floor before the last monologue, under the sheets and still all tied up, um, when Juliet's talking with the thing being projected on her while I'm on the floor, where I gasp for air, it happened twice but I don't remember the first thing that happened, but, uh, the second night, what I remember viscerally was that I was laying on the floor, um, and previously I had consciously made the choice not to move my body at all, and to try to just kind of, not zone out, but um, clear my thinking so that moment when I wake up, that GASP, there's a reliving of the surge of movement in your body. But, on this night, um, because of something that happened in my brain when I fell and you caught me and laid me down, um, not to say I was paralyzed, but my body wouldn't move, I wasn't making any choice to not move, like I couldn't, and I started having a flashback of, um, after, earlier this year after the car had hit me and I was on the stretcher and tied down and couldn't move, which is the only time in my life that I've ever been immobilized, and then, um, I, my physically I started, I had to keep, try incredibly hard to calm myself down, not to physically shake because my body started to try to tremor, like it was doing then. Um, and it was this really powerful, and I, I was like sh not (pants) crying, but my eyes were releasing a lot and I, I've been through all kinds of therapies and physical therapies and energetic stuff and emotional stuff and I thought, I didn't realize I was holding on to anything else. Um, but, being tied up and on the floor and on my back and not being able to move recalled that sense memory of when I was strapped down to the stretcher and it was really, uh, creepy. Intense, not creepy in a bad way, just kind of trippy, um. Yeah. And I could hear Caitlyn crying and screaming again...because when I got hit, Caitlyn said she was screaming the entire time and I never heard her. And the first time it happened I was, um, at a rehearsal for Sandy and Deborah, and the guy from France was over from Pan Theatre, and they were doing a, a movement warm up where they just kind of move through space and however their bodies wanna go. And they play music which is him on the piano, and sometimes people sing opera, sometimes people talk, whatever, just vocal sounds. Um and this woman, uh there was a guy singing, like a baritone singing, very, kind of like a lullaby, very relaxing and then this older Spanish woman came up and just started screaming. Uh, and it sent chills down my spine and I heard her in this ear (points to her left ear) and I heard Caitlyn scream in this ear (points to her right ear), and I broke down and I had to

leave I couldn't stay for the rest of the workshop, but that was the first time I heard it. And then again, on the floor, six months later, seven months later.

ME: How would you define spell?

The things that my brain comes up with first, you know, are all the stereotypical images of like witches over cauldrons, you know, and so spell I think of incantation, a series of words that have power to change something, but I, I don't think it's just words, it can be anything, an object, a, a conscious putting forth of intention or energy to change a situation and I, I think there are a lot of times you think of like, love spell, or, mm, if you put on some—like a hex, like it has, can, a negative thing you can make just, um, putting out the intention to change or control a situation?

ME: How about trance?

Entering into an altered state of being. That one I got. I have more experience with trance than spells? I don't know.

ME: Have you ever been under a spell?

HEATHER: I don't think so. But maybe it's a really good one and I never found out.

ME: How about a trance?

HEATHER (she nods): Mm hm. I mean, even just like out dancing. You know, like music puts people under trances, or being in a collective, like a crowd, you can go under trance any time you're not actively acting on your own motivation, the, uh, change in consciousness and moving in a way that's out of your control. It doesn't even have to be that far, I mean you think of, um, like the Frankenstein movie where all of a sudden there's a big crowd of people like trying to kill the monster. I think they're under a trance. Or, you go to any rave and the dj can put people under a trance by the rhythms of the music and the, or you can have, like a witch doctor creating an army of zombies, you know. Or even just like when you fall in love for the first time and those first couple of weeks when your brain is pushing endorphins and oxytocin like crazy any time you're around that person, everything is kind of fuzzy and beautiful and the world gets quiet, that's a version of trance, you know.

Alpha, beta, what's the next one, I don't remember, theta, and then the fourth level, the fourth level is the deep, delta, yeah, when you're acting but your brain is, your conscious brain is asleep, so to speak, but you're still physically moving around and acting, um, and that's where, um mind control happens and things like that, um, but another stage like meditation, you're just lowering your brain waves down so that talking egoic voice in your head isn't moving in a conscious way but, um, depends on your level of consciousness, too, and what you define as awake versus asleep, because everything is a version of everything else, in some opinions, so, so, yes it would be hard to define because arguably every action is a different level of trance, just depends on how deep you are, and who's to say that we're not all asleep all the time? Like I have a teacher that says, when you remember your dreams, they're not dreams, they're you being awake in an alternate reality and really it goes on forever and ever you just remember a split

second of it, so who's to say that this isn't some other alternate reality that someone else is dreaming that we're doing right now.

This is a crass generalization, but. How I'm normal and awake when I have to wake up at five o'clock and go to a temp job and sit at a desk all day and stare at a computer and type things into files and then go home, I'm never actually awake at all all day. Versus people that drink like excessive amounts of coffee or red bull or anything. That's not a normal state of awake because you're falsely pumping adrenaline and caffeine and all these additives into your body to make your brain fire rapidly. That's not a normal st—I don't, I would argue that no one wakes up based on the pattern of the sun, and eats based on what's growing naturally and locally at the time in tune with the land and the universe, I don't think there is a normal anymore.

ME: Did you ever feel that you were in contact with an entity or a consciousness that you had not encountered before during the exercises specifically or sometimes during the performances?

HEATHER: Mm, this is a difficult question, because during the past three to six months I'm, have constantly encountering new energies. Tied specifically to this project? No. But then there was like, the last night I told you I was going into the back room to change clothes and I thought someone was behind me and there was no one behind me, but there was someone there, do you know what I? Like I, that is not tied to the show, I don't think. In terms of the exercises of meditation and during performance did I feel something new? Well, every character is a little different of an energy so one developed, but I wasn't surprised by any—however during the duration of this rehearsal process and performance, yes. But I think those are due to the specifics set of circumstances of my personal life, and you too. That sounded accusatory. And you! No, no but just the world, you know, um, with Quang and Marsha and, and Reiki initiations and training, uh, the martial arts and those meditations and things that opened up like a different—and after the car accident, too, just something in my brain switched and seeing energy and starting to feel and hear other things, that happens now, but I don't think that's at all tied to the project, but, I think, when the project involves meditation and speaking to other worlds, those things, I don't know the word, talk to each other, compliment each other, one reacts because of the other.

Kind of like the way Max describes it, is, um, from, talking about spirits that are trapped in this dimension that aren't in physical form, that it's kind of like walking around in a dark room, and then anytime, there is, like you call it, an opening, any time there is someone who's consciousness is open to receiving other things, it's like seeing like a flashlight in the middle of darkness, you know, and so if you're open in that space it's like light is beaming out of your head, and people are like, 'Oh my god, over there, over there, over there, hurry!' So that, you know, the more open you are, the more you're gonna attract those things. If you want to. If you're open to it. So this process is another form of opening. So yes. (laughs)

4 September 2014

I think it wasn't so much, I think there was another state of consciousness, but it wasn't in the same way as *romeo&juliet/VOID* because it didn't feel like, 'Oh, we went under to this crazy magical altered place', however, considering what

happened during the run of this one, where we had to switch people in two days, the fact that the show ran smoothly and happened was like a miracle of unknown proportions. So there was something else working, on, because it was so, not that it was easy it was incredibly stressful, but, but it was kind of flawlessly easy to fill someone in and have it run successfully. And, I think that thing happened where, that good thing where the show starts and you don't really, maybe because there was so much switching of character and narrative the scenes turned over so quickly, but it was kind of like it started and then it ended. There was in conscious thought of what—for me—of what was happening in between. Like it started and then the show took over, and then....

For me, it's kind of just the letting go of conscious thought, it's uh, not that I don't have control over my actions or choices that I'm making, but it's just that something else is guiding, mm, it's releasing responsibility and letting that voice that talks in your head all the time that's judging, is turned off, and um, technically in trance I think your brain waves lower to a different frequency of vibrations, uh, but it's, for me it's letting go, uh, letting something else come through or, um, being guided without judgment or thought?

Part of being in the trance in performance is allowing yourself to be connected to the other people that are around, 'cause we talk a lot about the meditation, and Chris leading us to this other place and meeting our selves, but I think it's more than just that solo conversation, I think part of the trance, and part of letting yourself go, or part—I'm looking at Jamie in the mirror and not myself (laughter), um, pat of it is, like Steve, you were talking about the body, that others—there are so many levels of consciousness and identity, uh, and voices and narratives. Part of it is getting out of your own self-narrative and connecting with other people on that unconscious level, so there's moments where you can, um, like Seth was saying earlier, when you can interact and make choices in the moment and be fully present but not think, 'Oh, I'm gonna pick up this dog toy and throw it at someone', but it just happens kinetically because you're speaking on another level. I think that's part of a trance, too.

9 December 2014

So, before I did that dance with the one time that you focused on accessing an Ancestor or or whatever, um, to like let that energy come out, and that felt, it didn't feel like, 'Oh, something else came in', but I felt an energy change, and Jake kept asking me if I was ok all night, you know it felt like just being uh, like boosted, you know? And like a loss of self, being like very incredibly in the moment, and very um, you know, like, pbbbbbbb, after some of the practices I do when you open up to all of these other energies and everything is like hyperreal, or sometimes when you take certain drugs and everything's hyperreal, 'cause all of your senses and your brain—there's more blood and there's more oxygen and everything's opening, it felt kind of like that, but also it was a full moon, and I always get a little bit like that on full moons anyway. And so that was a whole other—'cause everything comes, everything was designed very specifically, like I knew from the first day we were talking I wanted to film the dance on the next full moon, when we were all media—when we were all doing our offerings to the things.

And where we were on the roof, I had never seen it before but Jake was like, 'No no no no that spot that spot', but it was perfectly behind me (the moon), you know, so everything also kind of happened, it seems like, the way it was meant to happen, um, for the filming. And you kept asking me aft—you kept saying I looked a little touched. So like something happened that—when I was in the car and I needed to eat, you kept looking at—when you were driving me home, you kept look—otherworldly, I think you said.

When we were going to Jake's car and I was just like, 'Well are you coming? Are you gonna—are you gonna be th—' 'cause there's that moment before you completely change into someone else where it's like just a little vulnerable, you know?

Since we were working specifically with Oshun I had just made a playlist of um, or a pandora station of, uh, songs of her. For her, to her. So I was listening to that, and I think part of what, uh, like there was always a little switch—the show went really fast for me but I was only in two parts of it so I don't know if it's 'cause, I mean it was a shorter show than normal, but it was like I would sit down and do my makeup and hair, and then it would be time to dance, and then I would come back at, and by the time I changed and unwrapped the head it would be time to talk. And then it would be over. But also I know I lost time a couple of times, because I know exactly, it would take this long to do this and this and this, and the last night in particular, I was almost late coming out because Jake knocked on my door and I still wasn't dressed yet, but I felt like I had just sat down. It was like, 'Woah, where did the forty-five minutes go?' you know? And that night, too, that was after I came back from Sedona, and I went outside, and when I was dancing I looked up, I told you this, um. I totally, and I had an ear infection the whole time too so I was always a little off-balance, it was a complicated show for me, um, but the last time, when I was spinning and I looked up, and it felt like, you know, 'cause I have a history of leaving, whooh! and falling over, and it felt like I went up into the stars, and I remember consciously like hav—like, 'Nope! Nope you gotta come back down! We can't do this now'. But it was like out of nowhere, I was spinning and I was spinning and then, I was going up.

The meditations were, like easily visible for me, you know like it sometimes, it's like you're talking and okay and whatever, and I have to like the one last time with like the going into the city and the town and everything like, I kinda had to, like, I made myself see the town every time. But this time with the desert, and the people, the ladies, they it was just there. But also I was working, or about to be working in a desert-based fire practice, and a dance with, to a Shango song, which is a fire god, and um, you know, there's a lot of crossover. And a lot of the things that were coming to me in the meditations were from like, served the work, and were based because of what you said but were from the other like my personal stuff. Which maybe is what happens for everyone, whatever your personal stuff is come out, comes out through any kind of form of meditation but um, it didn't seem to be like solely this show. but more as things, more like things, um, like I wasn't doing any other practices before, really, I had stopped, since I got back from Paris I wasn't really doing anything, and there were things that needed to be said or heard, and since I wasn't doing my own things, they were coming out through your meditations. And then it linked up to, uh, the trainings in

Sedona that I would do during performances, that I had no idea that it was, the similarities.

If you lock yourself in a room, and you're talking to just yourself, you're only gonna hear your own opinions, or your ego is gonna start talking back to you, or you look in the mirror and you talk to the reflection in the mirror, but these are all variations of yourself, so it's gonna become stagnant very quickly, and toxic very quickly, because there's nothing else for perspective. So if you're rehearsing a show just by yourself, then you're only getting that perspective, or you and the director. But when you have a group of people that are going through the same meditative experiences, and I think a lot of people from what I understand also had openings during this show, but if you're having an opening by yourself, it's terrifying. But if somebody else is, like, then you can, people n—I think it's a safety net.

While I was learning about the dance, I was learning about the culture, and the purpose, and it was, um, you know the power of, of connecting back into the earth was very important to me for that time 'cause I'd been spending so much time in meditations taking me out, and expanding consciousness and all of this stuff to do something, like, which is why it was really important for me to do it outside surrounded by fire in bare feet so my feet were on the ground in the mud, you know? Um, and for me personally in this experience if other people had been around it would've gotten in the way. So I think it's specific for each show, for each experience.

Like you said a lot of the show came from the loss of the Feminine Divine but for me, accessing that feminine power, but not in the like, feminist way, but in, in a like guttural, um, elemental, like uh, mm, an—not animalistic, but, you know not in a head way but in a body way, was something that I was lacking, which is why I was attracted to it. Fascinated by Josephine Baker and those dances and that kind of raw, unbridled spirit that comes through doing it. So the whole thing was also a lesson for me on how to—'cause it's come up in flashes before, dancing and performing—but how to access it and not get taken away with it, um, you know how to call on things but not let them become you, 'cause that's a very appealing, attractive energy, it's very powerful. It's fun when it clicks in but also it's a little like, getting into that place is also a little scary, you know, jumping into a fire.

Um, it was a more powerful energy, it wasn't, you know, 'cause it was a world energy, it was a universal energy, it wasn't a person that I was drawing on, it was a other thing. When I set out, that's one of the things that during the thing I asked, and you said, well it sounds like you're asking for Oshun's energy, and I was like, 'Welllll, nooooo, a little bit though'.

ME: If it has a name, this is Robert Farris Thompson, if it has a name, then it has a face, and that which has a face is controllable. So it's the idea of, 'Like, well, ok, but, you can't like, to, all of it, ahh!' people explode, you know, from trying to do that, but like—

HEATHER: Well, that's what I think part of Saturday night, the Saturday night show, after my first day in Sedona when I came back, I don't, I think, I don't think it was coincidental that Liana flipped out after that performance, because I, well you saw me in the bedroom afterwards, after I had been learning the Fire Practice

all day, and drove back from Sedona in like forty minutes, and, but I wasn't speeding, you know, and then I came here and in the kitchen I had to, remember right before I was, into the bedroom I was like, 'I have to give you some of this, I can't', because it was just too much, so I was already, I had already taken too much in, and then to put all that on top of it. After the show, like I could barely walk out to do the monologue afterwards and when I came back in, I tried to, when you were talking to me to meet your friend, I just collapsed in your bed, and had, and laid there motionless for an hour, 'cause I just couldn't. I had taken too much in. And that was the same night Liana had a really weird experience, and flipped out, not flipped out, that has negative connotations, but had a, an overwhelming opening the next day.

Yeah, well, I don't know how to get there, though, 'cause that's just something that always happens, for me, that always has, like I don't, for the most part, remember performances. Which is why I can't properly articulate on things that happen, like I can remember moments because I talked to you about them afterwards, but, if I remember a performance, I didn't do a good job in it.

I personally think that performers in school need to be taught uh, you know, like meditation or tai chi or qigong or things like this that bring you into the moment, because as soon as you attach yourself to a moment, it will be impossible to ever get there because you have already created a commentary on it, that that was that thing, and that thing has to happen again, and you're blocking anything else from ever happening.

Like years and years ago, when we first got to New York, back and forth in the dark, in front of the mirror, being the, ask like, 'Okay, about to go onstage, like, it's time, wh—I don't know where you are, like you gotta come in now', and, like I don't—you know, but not, like asking, 'Where are you where are you', 'cause I'm not seeing the character in the mirror, I'm seeing myself in the mirror, and then, and I have done this for a lot of shows, you know, like, and then there's a moment where everything kinda gets quiet, I guess, you know like you can feel it, I can feel it switch over. So when you talk about a spirit or an Ancestor, I never thought of it as possession, but something else coming in, I th—absolutely, in my opinion of what acting is, or what I do. You put yourself out of the way so the character can come through. And people accept that because you're just saying 'the character', you're not saying, 'a spirit or an Ancestor or something else', you know? Which a lot of people can understand and a lot of people don't. and look at you like you're a little crazy when you start talking about other worldly things, but. You know, like, the Method. It's a more phys—it's from an outside in way, but you're doing all of these things so you can get in the place of the character, it's the same thing, it's just a different terminology. You're inviting other energy, other physicalizations, other habits in and that's what makes a good actor because you are changing yourself into that person. What makes a brilliant actor is changing back into yourself at the end, knowing that you're not becoming that other person, but just kind of wearing it for awhile.

BETH MAY

4 September 2014

When I, when I think back to what I was experiencing during the run of the show, and sort of why I had to have Seth take over for me, I was like, how did I even make it that far into the run? and it was like, Oh, it was sort of because, yeah there was sort of, the, my, my day to day life where I was like, well, miserable, and then um, during the run of the actual play where it was just like, sort of, I don't want to say auto-pilot, but, yeah, there was this sort of, like, yeah, I can do this, because there's this you know, driving force of, it's just, it's just go go.

For me, what I, I agree with Jamie and the, the most vivid part of it felt, uh, I experienced during the warm-up, meditation part, and um, it felt like that sort of hazy, twilight bit before you fall asleep every night, um, like when you're staring up at the ceiling pretending to be asleep, so you make yourself fall asleep. So it's sort of the first couple of rehearsals I was pretending to be in the trance, so I made myself be in the trance, and I I—eventually it was like, 'Oh, no, this is what that feels like'.

I think that because I know that I, personally, personally am a, a person of I lo—I like to, remain in control at all times, and the, the concept of losing that for something as important as rehearsals or performances seemed like really, it would be really scary but um, it's there's such a, there's such a give and take to it, there's such a duality to whether or not you, you feel, I mean, at no, at no point did I feel like, 'I have no idea where my body's going!'

5 December 2014

BETH: And I, and I wondered if it was just like having that, that time at the beginning of every rehearsal, and, and, and just sort of like, I mean, you are en—you are engaging with the unconscious but, at the same time just sort of mostly letting the con—uh, your conscious go, which, you know, it, I think it really helps just sort of get me into a place where I could just feel like hey, it's ok, it's not, it's not, you know. It's not the end of the world if I um, if I'm not, you know—
BETHANNE: —If I don't do it the same way every single line, yeah.

BETHANNE: Did you find that doing the trance had residual effects on other portions of your life outside of rehearsal? Or was it more of like, a, a separated thing like, I come into rehearsal, I do the trance, it affects the rehearsal, and then I go out and my life is as-is.

BETH: It, it felt like a separate thing to me, um, yeah, it definitely, definitely felt like a separate thing just because, um, it was almost like, rehearsal was this tranc-y haven where I could just you know, like I, like I could do my, I could do my real life and then go to rehearsal and I would say that I, I did feel residual effects of it just because um, I, I just think it, like honestly just calmed me down in my, in my day to day life, and um, just made things easier just, just knowing that I would have consistency, and I, I know that's that's that's such a me thing but, and it's not, it's not a very general, um, like over-arching *Hotel Athena* theme, but I,

yeah I I did feel that, it was just nice to have the time, um, to sort of relax and not worry.

Something that actually did help me carry the trance through day to day life was, there, I, I felt so many applications for the theme of the story, and I just saw it everywhere. And then, as far as the, the character, I wou—I would begin to think how Chris writes, like, just the, um, like almost, I don't know, frenetic poetry, beauty, you know like, uh, but of course my, my thoughts didn't circle back on like a poignant theme or anything, they would just sort of flow, and, um, but yeah I would, I would just sort of, I would get in that mindset everywhere. Oh, there's like, there's an application for *Hotel Athena*, and there's an application, um. So I guess it wasn't so much memory recall for me as much as um, finding the way to relate the story and the themes and the characters to as many things that I could when I wasn't actively in the trance.

Plus when, when, I watched the, the play, uh, I mean, 'cause we weren't, we weren't watching the play, we were just doing our parts, and so the play itself is another form of trance because you're, it's just, it's just completely of its, it's like, you know, it runs on its own steam, once it gets going, it's going and you're watching all these other people who are also in the trance, and you're like, you're in the auto zone with them, 'cause, um, and because, because you're surrounded by, um, by people who are in the same state as you, not only, um, sort of, at the same level of consciousness but playing through the same story line over and over again, then yeah, the entire process of the play becomes a trance, and so it's like, that's when I fully felt hypnotized by the, by *Hotel Athena*, because I mean, I, yeah, because when, when we were doing rehearsals we would do the trance then we would just do, like, a scene, but this isn't, it it wasn't representative of the entire work.

Sometimes it was hard just coming in and then immediately having to go from like, you know, meeting everybody to like, down on the floor, lights out, so I, I think that I initially had a hard time focusing to get really into the meditation, and then once I, once I could it really clicked for me, and I, I knew that once I actually like, felt myself, floating, that sounds, all right, but I knew that once like, once Chris said, 'Now feel yourself floating through space', and I could like lay there and feel myself floating through space, that I was focused and ready to go through with the rest of the meditation and that it would be ok and I wound't like, like lose my mind somewhere along the way, but I think there wasn't anything specific that I inserted so much as made sure that the, all the scenery in my head looked the same, every time. My problem was that I could, I could never, once I picked an animal, an Ancestor, a companion, could, could never ever ever stay with them, um. I, you know, what seemed brilliant in one night, in the harsh light of another night seemed completely not okay for the characters. So I, I went through like, um, a grand series of companions and animals, yeah, it was completely a parade and um I yeah I had I had problem, I had problems picking an Ancestor that I felt really represented, um, the characters so then I just sort of did one for me, and, yeah, it was sort of give and take whether the, the meditation was for my character, getting into character, or for me personally just to sort of get in work mode.

'Cause I would, I would even be driving here, I'm gonna be like, tonight, tonight it's a lion-tiger cross-breed, but um, but no, it was, yeah it was just, i, I could never, yeah, there was never one that felt right and especially when we were doing different scenes, like different animals felt right for different scenes and, um. Yeah, so I think if I had, if I had really sat down and thought about this and, especially if, if I'd just taken a moment before every meditation to, to donate to the, the headspace of the play, rather than what everybody did at work um I think I would, yeah, I would have seen a little more um success in that, in that regard.

I think what was so different about this, these performances, was that, the, were you could see the audience like literally like right there and you can even, you can even really kind of tell if they're like into it or not, like you can really tell, as opposed to when you're on a stage and you look out and you're blinded by the lights and you, you just see sort of black masses, and I think because I could see the audience and because I could see how they were re, reacting, I couldn't help but be very sort of conscious internally of what I was doing, and also I think sort of, from a safety standpoint, like just walking around all these places in this house with all these people and sort of avoiding them, and I think that had I just totally you know, let it go, I might have bumped into some—I, I, I, that was the fear at least, that was, that was the fear, um, and yeah but the, I think every, every show is so different, you, yeah, except, I totally, then the experience where I don't, I just don't really remember it.

I think I, I carry them with me like, like a writer, like, um, always being conscious that, um, a character is a three-dimensional thing with feelings for, for sort of everything, and reactions to everything, and thus, everything that I do, my character could also have a reaction that is either similar to what I would think or radically different, so I think it's just the, the other, that other level of awareness where you're, it's like having somebody like tapping you on the shoulder conscious—I mean, con, constantly whenever you're doing something, like, 'Well this is what I would do', and I'm like, 'I know that's what I w—what you would do, that's why I'm playing you'.

On screen, it, ok it, it didn't, it didn't really help me, because, at the point in the production at which we had filmed those videos, I just did not feel very connected to my character and I just didn't feel very solid in my character, so it was like, it was like watching a half-formed person dressed in my clothes, like sort of me, sort of not me, just doing, uh, you know, just doing like a sketch comedy, like funny or die video, um. But then hearing it, hearing other people's monologues over it, really sort of, was able, got me sort of centered into, well that's just sort of a transitory period of characterization, so it still is the character, I, yeah, that's how I, that's how I excused my not being read—but, the thing that, ok the thing that really bugged me was, the the the voiceovers were not my voice, or not what the, my voice sounds like and that was just, not only is that just, like, whatever you, 'cause people are so self-conscious of their voices anyway, so whenever, whenever I would hear like one of the voiceovers go, and I'm just like, not only does that not sound like me, it doesn't sound like the character, and the only, um, the only thing that connects it is that it's, it's the dialogue, it's the words.

Ok so just sort of speaking plainly or whatever um. I, I feel like my experience living with bipolar disorder, is like I'm constantly at this sort of median line, or

trying, or trying really really really really hard to stay at this median line, and then, there are, there are evil trances on either side and so, um. When I was, when I was doing *endofplay*, and I was just um, I was really just, completely, completely in the trance of depression, that was just like absolutely ruling my life, and, and there was nothing else at that point, and I feel like, trying to insert the trance of the character on top of the trance I was like living in, just did not work. And, so, the trance, the trance aspect, um, *endofplay*, I, I can't remember it, and I, and I just, but I just know that it, it didn't work for me and that you know, every, every night, every rehearsal was like a struggle being me, not being, you know, it wasn't, like a struggle being Dog, um. So. And I, I've, I approached that play from a very shallow place, and in in terms of that just bec—just because, um. Yeah, it, it just seemed, it seemed like the only thing that I could do was to, to just sort of create this impression of what I thought the Dog was. And, and then not, just not worry about the other parts of it, because that was just too much, and then, so, going in to *Hotel Athena*, um. I. I was real, I was really apprehensive about the, you know the, I gue—I mean, like hon—if I'm being honest with myself, I get apprehensive about being involved with anything long term, because I just, I just never—I never know, I can say that, you know, I guess, medication, e.c.t., can only do so much so but I did come into it completely leveled out, and completely ready to go, and, so the fact that it was just, it was just me, not, you know, me plus disease, and then layering the trance on top of it, not only did it, it work, it just, it completely, it completely helped me, um, it almost helped me be more aware of trance states in general, in terms of, now I can feel when I'm, you know, not leveled off any more, when I'm, so, yeah I just, I'm more presently aware of altered states I guess and um. And you know what, another thing that helped me was the um, the offering, weirdly enough, and I, I'm not sure if it's because um, I, I definitely think it was more of a, a just a motivational thing for me, like I, I have that, and I, I could see it, and I could touch it, so it was like, it was like the absolute, just present motivation to stay sane, to stay with the character, to stay with the play, to stay with all my commitments, and not, it helped me actually more in my everyday life than it did with the production.

BETHANNE: Did the process differ for you being in like a more traditional rehearsal space versus being in a home?

BETH: Oh, um, ye—yes.

BETHANNE: The environment made a difference?

BETH: Yeah, um. It was, and I think for, for better and for, for worse at time, I mean, it was. The, you know, theaters carry that aura of like work and then homes do not so um. It was, it was weird to know that I could just grab a cup of coffee whenever I was you know feelin' a little tired and, and um. Which was, it was nice, it was um, it made, it made the process feel very accessible, um, but at the same time there's something a, there's something a little too casual about it at times?

BETHANNE: What about the trance itself, the meditation, did having the meditation in a home differ from in a rehearsal—?

BETH: It felt, it, conversely, it felt like it worked like way better when it was in the—but that was just because in *endofplay*, um, we did, we did it a lot, we

rehearsed here, I, yeah, so and then, I remember, *endofplay* really didn't feel like *endofplay* until we got into the space.

When we did the, when we did the meditation we were normally sitting up, which I, I don't know, the difference between sitting up during mediation and laying down is like, galaxies, I, I felt so much better laying down, yeah, go the day, and ow my back is so sore, and sit straight up for the meditation, can't relax.

I think for me I had a, I had a really hard time adjusting to when we first started performing here, because, um. There, one it's just, it's just weird to perform in a house, and just get used to not being out in the front room where um, it does sort of carry the, the image of a stage just because it's so wide open and everything, but then getting, getting into here, getting into the kitchen and stuff like that, and having to come out from the, through the curtain, um. I, I normally get pretty bad stage fright, but I got a little worse stage fright on, on, on, yeah this just because, just knowing that there would be no separation whatsoever between like the f—the fourth wall is millimeters, you know, thick, for this, um. The, 'cause everybody's just so close up, and. And then in the rehearsal process for that, as well, um, yeah it would, it would sort of play on my nerves, because um, I would see, yeah, I would see like Jake sit, Jake sitting there and I'm like ah, do I look at Jake? do I, 'cause I know that when audiences are here, yeah Jake the human, um, I know that when audiences are here, I'll be having to pick out people to look at and you know and, and um, sort of connect with, but because I know Jake, and he's directing, and he can call Hold anytime, and all this stuff, I just did not feel comfortable looking him in the eye but I did not want him to feel like I was certain actors that we make fun of for not making eye contact. Yeah so it's like it was a little complicated at times.

17 December 14 (Written)

I see the trance, charm, and spell as being three separate entities (or I guess phases) serving a common state of mind. So to me, the spell is an initiation to a more meditative way of thinking – and this applies to your plays, Chris, but also a lot of creative endeavors. The spell can occur the first time someone gets an idea, or reads a script with a particularly distinct voice, or the more literal first time they sit down for a project-specific meditation. In other words, it's the creative spark or the trigger. I think of the trance as what results, a sort of waking state very driven by the soul, very motivated by the internal needs of the artist and the project. And I think that this idea of trance serves a pretty wide variety of projects. It could be “the zone” you get in while working on something, or a performance so driven by the character you're playing that you don't have to think about it. I look at the charm as an aide to the spell and the trance, like a way to call them forth. Again, I think of the charm not very specifically. I think that a charm can be a physical object, but I also think that the charm can be the project itself, like the feeling when just thinking about a play makes you want to work on it. Of course, the charm also feels like something that can be shared. You want to “charm” an audience; you want them to experience at little of the artistic tunnel vision you have. You want them to be so charmed they're not thinking about their jobs or cars.

BETHANNE

5 December 2014

I think it was just like a matter of detaching the frontal cortex and um what was really nice about doing *Hotel Athena* in comparison to any other show I've performed in, is the anxiety level was like way low and way manageable because I was just like, it, it, the, it, it was like, it, it brought it to a lower place because um it was like, this isn't about like, 'Ok I need to go to downstage right, and we need to do this, and we need to make sure this works', it's just like, 'No, you just need to be true to the message, and you need to communicate the message, um, that your character needs to communicate to people', when you like actually like boil it down to what theatre, like that's how I felt like is we were boiling it down to what theatre was, so then um, and letting the subconscious like just take you through the rehearsal that, yeah, the anxiety level shot way down, for me. Each night, it was just like, which is surprising, because for like us, the the *tres leeches* (Jake the director's nickname for the three women), um, we, I mean we rehearsed what one, maybe two times a week? if that? so, given that limited amount of rehearsals it's actually very surprising for me that the anxiety level was so low.

I, I felt like, we're gonna, we're gonna get real personal here, I felt like it did not affect any other part of my personal life other than like relationships like romantic relationships because the trance for me was about getting into the ro-like romantic mindset that you have to get when you talk, when you're talking about *Hotel Athena* and you're talking about lost loves and where they go and the nuances of that, so it was like, ok, when I am in this space that is the mindset that I'm thinking of and that is the place emotionally that I draw from, and I just don't really draw from those places, um, unless I am in a relationship of sorts. So that was like the only place that it like whatever come back for me personally beyond the show was like thinking, it was like being in contact with people whom I had romantic foregoings with, and then like suddenly like um moments of the trance would just kind of hit me and then they would, and then those things melded together. But in terms of like, where I spend, so it's like, the trance, when it thematically like and that was like I guess me putting a theme on the trance of like, I am getting into this place of *Hotel Athena*, 'cause like a lot of like my, the companions I had during the trip were also I guess romantically related, um, so then they all kind of lived in the same world personally when that like sort of came up during *Hotel Athena*. Um, but in terms of where I spent the majority of my day at work? no, it was almost like a, like a wall between rehearsal, like there's this world I go to beforehand and then there's this world that I enter.

BETH: Do you, do you find that there is like any character overlap, um, you know how, in, I don't know if this is true for you but when I, when I do a lot of plays and I'm playing a character, you know, I just, I feel like that character is sort of you know my regular day-or not, I'm not doing a very good job with this, but-

BETHANNE: -Is it sort of that you find yourself in the, in the character, like these are, these are the elements of me that we share-

BETH: Or yeah like or yeah this is what this character would do if, if they were getting gas right now, like, you know, stuff like that, like, oh this character would never get diesel.

BETHANNE: No, I don't do that, I mean I, you know, I'm uh, that certainly not to say that that isn't valid, it's just, I do not, um, think that, um, but I do, yeah, I mean I do the kind of different thing, though, where it's like when I'm in rehearsal its sort of like I call upon the times in my life that the, that these two things were related, where I was like, yes, I am very like, this is gonna sound interesting, I was very much like death in this moment of my life, like. Um. Having to be, having to say the things that she would say, so it was like, it was more like, m—it was more like memory recall, if we're gonna, you know, use those like actor-y terms, it was memory recall that came up for me, and will always I think just be like the way my brain thinks in performance, which is fine because I've felt like that played with the trance, it didn't, it didn't just like, what's the term I'm looking for.

BETH: Juxtapose?

BETHANNE: No, juxt— isn't juxtapose like ni—I don't know, like. They didn't conflict with each other. There we go, those two things don't conflict with each other, so. Um. So I guess kind of like that, not like day to day but, my memory is so strong, like a bank.

BETH: How, how much did the, like the companions and the animals, when we, when we did the meditation, help you, um, yeah, you know?

BETHANNE: That was my favorite part of the meditation were the companions, um, because of who, I guess I could say I chose but who just allowed to like come through and be like, 'Yep, that's the right one, that feels right (snaps), that's who's going with'. Especially because it was the same every time, it, I mean it felt pretty real, my imaginat—you know I guess the imagination or the unconscious or whatever, it's vivid enough that, um, these companions felt real enough and like I can't say that consciously during a rehearsal process I ever recalled them, um, but I guess it was enough, and this is true about probably a lot of spiritual things, it's enough, I guess, to begin a process. Calling upon them. That, um, when you just go in the beginning you maybe don't consciously have to recall, if you go in with a thought it, it's strong enough to carry you through. Especially the thing about the Ancestor, picking an Ancestor, that was like, whoo, I think that probably, if I was going to consciously recall anybody it would have been the Ancestor.

I too have a very difficult time doing that in general, like I live in my prefrontal cortex um, so it's like, to, to be able to separate those two things is like, it it actually takes a great deal of focus, that, so the, the foc—the thing that helps me focus was just like imagining like sensory like ok how does it feel to be in like this dark space and like, when the light hits me, is it, just like, is it warmth? is it that I should be experiencing warmth and I'm not, is it um, and almost always like imagining stimulation, not only helped but was the better answer, it was a stronger answer, so, I went with that.

It's like body awareness kicks in when you're performing, and I never know, I think there's just so many different ideologies that it felt like at ASU, in our training it was frowned upon, but it's like, I, I don't know, it, you know, do—how much body monitoring do we do anyway? in day to day life, and, you know, if you, if you, you know what I mean? if you apply that to performance, is that as wrong, too? Like, like body awareness. 'cause I consider like body awareness like extreme—like one of the highest levels of like consciousness while performing,

rather than unconsciousness, like I mean, body, you know what I mean? just like you're performing and you're imaging like what it looks like while you're performing. That outer, like, I don't know, that process is very like conscious to me. Rather than unconscious. So I always thought like that I don't know if was just like me misinterpreting messages, but that the message was always like, 'You need to stop that, you need to stop that right now, like, I can tell you're body monitoring and you need to stop that, that's, that creates a disingenuous performance'. Which, neither Heather nor Jamie ever give disingenuous performances, you know what I mean?

(After being asked if the trance was like being unconscious, or if a part of herself was watching) I would yeah, I would actually say the second thing. When I imagine that kind of performance that I've had, yeah, it's more like, i'm doing it but it's like I'm watching somebody else do it. Rather than watching, yeah. Yeah, it is, it's like watching somebody else do it and just mimicking it, like almost in front of a mirror.

To your point, the whole, like when you're really close to somebody, like when Kerin Martinez like sat right here, like yeah, you kinda can't help but just like, go, yeah, I guess unconsciously go out of the situation to look at the room as a whole including yourself, and be like, 'What is this looking like right now in this moment?'

I just, I felt like, and I don't, I don't know if this was on me, or if it was on Jake, or if, or what, but, my character felt so celestial that I think that even, 'cause I'm thinking like, yeah, that's an interesting like thought process and Beth is a writer so she takes her with, so why do I not take certain characters with me and why did I not take death with me, but I was like, I don't know if I could have taken her like with me throughout my day to day business, like, I guess theoretically I could have, but that's why I had to like bring certain elements of myself into the character rather than just take the character as was, like, grocery shopping and, and whatever, I just, it felt more celestial and more like, just even keeled, it's broad yeah. Yeah, that it was like taking her to these very specific tasks was like it just it would I could have done it but I don't know if it would have done anything for me.

Yeah I, I'm not self-conscious of viewing or hearing myself on camera, um, and I, I enjoyed the media over-overall, I enjoyed it a lot because I think that it put the characters of Athena into sort of this beginning of like icon phase, where you're seeing something like be—you know what I mean? So it was like that made it actually like once we saw that it made it really easy to, it actually helped with character building, because it was like, you could, you could create this place of like, well yes, our characters are important because we are in everybody's life, in that way we are iconic.

That's why I really, um, was very excited to do this process because I'm such a like cerebral person, that to create a, a discipline for myself in which, like, you know, you need to access this other part of you um that's equally valid, um, was very nice. It was a nice change of pace and a good broadening, opening experience.

I mean, it was, that was the thing that helped make it personal, rather than just, 'this is work that we're doing for this, and it is unrelated to your life outside', it became very much like, 'no, you're a performer and that in and of itself is, is emotional enough that you need to access, um, other emotional', and other very interesting things happened during that time, um, that were just very excellent, and I was like, 'Okay, this makes lots of sense'. Yeah, it was just, you know, and so you, you then then you're always like, you're like, well is it because I did it that like, you know, the self-fulfilling prophecy, or is there just things that like, you just, you never know but you're like, at the end of the day, does it matter? They happened, like it hap—what happened happened, and you have to roll with it, and accept that they were events that were probably related to the offering, so, um. I think, what I think, what comes to mind is the, the Ann Bogart book, *And then you act*, and then, um, that, the part that she has about theatre needs to have alchemy? That's the alchemy that we had that we could carry through to the show, so, um, and I, I love that part, that's actually probably my favorite section of that book, because it's like, it is so true, and the difference between a show about like, you sit down and you think, 'I should enjoy this and I don't', and the show that you're like, 'I don't know why but I loved it and I wish I could see it again', is the alchemy. So I think having something like the offering um, e a part of, of your methodology, could potentially aid that for every show for people.

They want, they want magic, and if people deny that part of performance, they're dis-servicing themselves to any work that they do, because y—whatever, yeah, you want magic, and um, that, that for me is where, it's like that's where we're getting it from is completing the offering.

Like I was able to focus on the the theme and the emotions and the nuances that needed to be communicated rather than the mechanics of the show. So the mechanics of the show sort of beca—that was what became more subconscious. The conscious level stuff was like the theme, the subconscious was all like a—the mechanics, so it's like when they tell you like, when you're onstage, and there's a show happening, you're ninety percent character and you're ten percent actor, 'cause the ten percent actor has to do all the mechanical stuff, it was like that ten percent was what especially became subconscious, and then it became, the conscious level was the, I need to evoke these kind of like memories and thoughts in people in my audience members that are here right now.

16 December 14 (Written)

I would define trance/spell as a tool to take an actor into an altered state or frame of mind for the intention of a more authentic/organic performance experience for both audience consumption and performer execution. The altered state itself is one that ties the action of a play, reality, and the spiritual realm into one place with the use of meditation and consistent imagery.

OUR KIKI

2 May 2015

EVAN CARSON: At the beginning it was kinda like foreign. I didn't really know, like, what it was or what it was about or what we would kinda get from the method, so I kinda was like all right, cool, it's different, I never experienced it before, let's just dive right in. And it was, um, it was kinda of like, um, it felt kind of like guided for the first couple of times, 'cause we're still going through, just like is it gonna be this similar structure of this meditation every time that we do it, like at the beginning of rehearsal, so I was wondering kind of what it was all about, if we do it the same way. So for the first couple of days I was really in my head throughout the whole process, but I was also still trying to like get out of my head and just relax and let the process kind of take over so, I was kind of rigid the first couple of days, and just kind of weirded out by something new I guess, but as I got more into it, you know, weeks into rehearsal, you know we'd, we'd lay down and stuff, the lights would go out, we'd close our eyes, and I'd just kind of breathe, just kind of feel myself on the floor, just kind of relax. And that was when I'd really get into it, 'cause there was the guided, you know, walking through the city, you know with your, you know and then going to the cafe, finding your character and stuff, the interactions. I really tried bringing that imagery to life, in my head, so I tried I was walking up fifth avenue back in Anchorage, Alaska where I grew up, and I'd go to Snow City Cafe, and I'd go to the table where I always went with my ex-girlfriend, I'd go there, and there's just me in the trench coat kind of sitting there from the top of show dress, yeah, it was weird. So, at the beginning it was weird, I didn't know what to think of it, but then, by the end, I had a really in-depth, personal, cathartic kind of story world in my mind.

ME: Cathartic how?

EVAN: Yeah, um, I mean, I'm just thinking of, of just like when you, when I'd go into the cafe and stuff like that, or I'd uh, um, Jake guided us that um, when we, when we stay in the cafe, that it's probably time for like the character to leave and, you know, go do their thing and stuff like that, was like some sort of contact in some way, some sort of physical contact, when you touch them, the other self, I guess I should call it the other self, when you would touch the other self, the other self would touch you, I always like envisioned like this weird thing of like, this arm would be on the table, and this arm being forward, and I'm grabbing his arm doing this, and he's grabbing, and it was, really weird, but like yeah it was during that I just thought of like emotions and what all the character goes through, and maybe how that's similar to me, because it's when you're making that contact, makes me think of like, you know, it's a two-way street, so, it made me think of what George goes through in the show, what the character goes through in the show, or his backstory, his life, his personal life, made me think of that, and then it made me try to relate to him in those ways, and then think if he could relate to my life experiences in some ways, so. It was kind of cathartic in just thinking about that stuff, it just brought up memories or emotions or feelings or whatever was on my mind at the time or, you know on my mind during that day or if something was pissing me off, if I was happy about something, maybe I'd transmute some of those to that other self and then during that day of rehearsal or during that night of performance, that might show. so. Kinda cathartic in that really weird, kind of meta, transmission, yeah.

ADAM MENDEZ, JR.: The beginning of, of this, um, was very static for me, because I had to use a part of my body I don't use much, is imagination, and I was struggling more trying to envision every little detail, but as I got used to it more and more it allowed me to, um, ease into a lot, a lot smoother, and it brought me, it allowed me to do a, an internal switch to get into that, the character I believe, I mean, and also considering my background is extensively in musical theatre, a lot of my acting past was very high energy and like um looking back was not natural, but allowing that, the five, ten minutes to lie down and actually ease into it, it really brought my body down to a, a very personal, intimate level, um, I've never experienced on stage before. And I feel it pushed me in a whole new direction that I've been looking for for awhile, which I want to continue a little bit more.

ZACH RAGATZ: This wasn't like unfamiliar territory for me, um, because I, I've done a lot of work with Oscar Giner, who does a lot of, uh, spirit kind of journey stuff into the spirit realm and working with wisdom beings, things like that. So, it, it was, meditating during rehearsals wasn't an uncommon thing during a couple of shows I've done with him. Um, so, doing this was, yeah, definitely familiar, but it was interesting in the changes that were made, 'cause it was a far more, uh, realistic, uh, meditative experience, 'cause I would, I would envision the city that I had been to before but void of people and I would go to a church and there was my, and I never saw a, another self, um, person or character or anything, um, remotely human, I always saw my wisdom being which I have a, a, a mental relationship with already so that was always the manifestation that I saw um during the meditations. Um, and so, it was, it was comforting for me to work with uh that kind of side again just because I'm very familiar with that kind of work, um, and use it a lot, so it was nice to, um, have an opportunity to use it six times a week on a consistent basis. Um, I did have one interesting experience, the one time where, um, during one of the first few times we were doing the contact with the, uh, other self, um, I had a really, uh, vivid, uh, experience where I felt like I was being held down by something and, and being cut all over my body, and, uh, like I couldn't, I was like trapped, um, in a place that I, like, uh, before hand had assumed was a safe place, um, so it was really, uh, frightening first and then it kinda sh-sh-sh-shocked me out of the meditation. And then, I did like a cleansing ritual that night and things to, um, try to, uh (southern accent) exorcise the demons (laughter), uh. So that, um, yeah, that was, and then after that it was, it was never a, it, that never happened again, so it was just that one time, and I don't know, I couldn't relate a, an experience in the day or my life at that time that had, that would've maybe triggered something like that, so, it was just a really, uh, um, strange kind of out of body experience, like I was watching myself be held down by something and that was like assaulting me and, like, attempting to do harm and, and was very, I don't know, strange, um. But then, uh, so pretty much I'd, I, I remember strictly following along with the meditations, uh, throughout the rehearsal process, and then in the actual performances, I tried some different meditation techniques just, uh, regardless of this, the, the other self, um, since I, I have tried to practice meditating in my own life outside of acting, um, so I was trying to play with some of those and see if they helped, so the one that I kind of stuck to was just um, uh envisioning like a, a white pillar candle that was lit and just focusing on that and the energy transfer between that, um, since the process of really growing the character felt like it was kind of done by the time we were opening, uh, for me at least, then it was mostly just a matter of uh, ss-being able to return each time to this set of incidences which, every time

I did it, I had lived through it each time so it was almost like a, like a reset button for me to go back to the beginning of the play and the experience for the character, um, And so, yeah, I was just trying to see if that, if that would, uh, affect my performance or anything like that, so. Um. But yeah, overall, I think it's a very uh, effective way of, uh, channeling a, another type of, um, acting through, into, into a realistic setting which I think is always interesting when you meld the two, um, kind of internal, imagination with the actual text and work, um, seems to bring out the best performances.

SHANNON PHELPS: At first, it was like, I don't know, I was just, I've never experienced anything that peaceful before so it was very relaxing for me to just be able to like go in, have my mirror, sit down, really kind of, just let everything go and just like meditate and just be very open and peaceful and that was really great. And then I think a pivotal point of change happened after, 'cause there was like one day where uh they have like a white feather, and they take off all of the like dirt and everything off of us. And it was just such a relief, essentially, um, and it was like a relaxation moment for me, and after that, my world changed a little bit, and, uh, the street, 'cause usually it was just like a plain city that we'd walk in and then we'd go to our cafe and sit down and talk to the other self, and after the feather, um, there, it like, created a loophole for me, so I'd walk on the street, and then I would then, it, the street would like meld into like this pool essentially so you'd have to like dive through but you'd have to get to the other side in a certain amount of time, and I could never do it by myself, I'd always have to have the other self help me, I know that sounds a bit, a bit odd, but it, it was really interesting after that, and it was only on certain days I found, um. So that was cool, 'cause it was like a game within this world that I could play, um. But yeah, so I found it really relaxing, I was able to memorize my lines a lot quicker than I have in the past (everyone nods at this), which was so wonderful, um, I just felt an automatic connection, um, I felt it when I first read the script initially that's what drew me to it, but then I really understood the character once we started the meditation. So I felt like I knew a little bit more about her than I would have without the meditation, um, and then the whole process of doing it every day, I'm all about routine as well so the fact that it was very consistent, where we'd meditate in, then we'd meditate out was really beneficial for me, because I knew we were gonna start it, there would be a process, and then it would end, and then we could step back from it, and, and kind of analyze it through our journals and our writing, and I wrote every day about my experiences, um, 'cause I love journaling, and so, when I wrote, I would like, look back, from like weeks prior, and I'd be like, 'Oh my gosh that did happen!' or 'This changed!' or 'This was what I felt on that day and it really impacted my experience', so, um, I don't know, it was just, it was a really fun thing to kind of like look back on, so I'm glad I, I was as very strict about my journaling as I was.

ME: Did you at any point feel that you were entering what you would call an altered state of consciousness, or a trance, influence of a spell, something like that?

(They all say yes, laughter)

ZACH: Really, vividly for me was that, that, that moment when I was, when I felt like I was being held down, but th—I mean, for the most part it was always, um, an altered state of consciousness for sure where um, it, because a lot of the time when you, when you're trying to meditate, there's almost a feeling of sinking in

through your consciousness, um. And that would happen almost instantly toward the end of the process for me, so, um, the, the way that the meditations flowed would uh allow me to access a different kind of, uh. consciousness I guess is the best way to describe it, um, or at least during meditation, and after the meditation would end, then it would kind of meld back with the, with real life or whatever, whatever we call this, um, and then, yeah, I, I, I certainly had a very vivid, different sense of perception, like I was trapped outside of my body, with, um, with the one time that the, the bad juju happened. (Laughter) So, yeah, I mean, yes.

SHANNON: I definitely felt the, uh, the release of self I guess, um. There was one day that, in particular, we were working on act two, and, we were listening to a song and, I don't know, when I, when I heard the song playing in the meditation, I felt like I was in a movie, so, it was, I don't know, very interesting how that affected the way that I spoke in the cafe, and then after that, I like when we woke up from the meditation I was like really relaxed but yet tired, but I wasn't, I was trying, I don't know, it was like a strange calm that washed over me after that, and I felt like a lightness to me but I was also, like, still connected somewhere else, um, so that day, and a lot of creative things came up that day, like, I found like little tics that Molly would do, like little quirky noises that she would make, and then, so those were like the two things, like hair spinning and like the little noise, were things that stuck with me, and then, when I would get out of that and finish the meditation, I'd, like, the heaviness of life kind of came back to me. So that was really interesting, it look took all of that away, and allowed me to just really focus on the character. And then when I returned back to the, like, out of the meditation, it was more, I'm in reality, but there was always, after our meditation, a moment of you sit there and wiggle your fingers, and some days I'm like, 'I just wanna lay here. I don't wanna do anything'.

ADAM: When I was in the beginning, it didn't feel real to me, so it was just my mind running, you know, on auto pilot a little bit, and so, I don't know if I was fortunate enough but I was able to um find something to ground me into that realm which actually made me, I think have the affect it did, was, um, seeing my grandfather. Who um passed away last year and having to see him there created a whole new, um, realm to the whole thing. And, after, the first time I saw him, I, I was, I was scared, I didn't like it, it made me very, very uncomfortable, but then, when he, when I realized it was not about he was there to, to haunt me, more to help, it really, really started to feel a lot easier, and then after that, it, it all became so easy for me to just go there and see everything, and my body would always be hot when I went through this world, like I don't know why, my physical body just felt like despite how cold the room felt, some days it felt incredibly cold, I was on fire inside, and I would twitch too while in this world, and there were, there was a time when I was done, my um, my calves were real sore, I don't know why, 'cause I walked uphill a lot in my dream so I was like, 'Woah, that's sick. That's really sick!' And I made a routine to every time go in, to, to say hi to my grandfather and the—it just made everything a lot more, more sensible. So yeah, I don't know to have that, that third eye there, it really makes things surreal.

SHANNON: That actually brings up a point for me, in the process, because when it first started and then it happened at the end, too, um, we were just laying there and were supposed to exit ourselves in a way, and I would see like myself laying

there and then like my soul self ascending up and there was like always a ball of light right in front of like the abdomen area, like floating above the body, and it was, I don't know, it was really, I don't know it was like really beautiful, like it was like, laying horizontal, like float up, the ball was there, but there was always like a connection between that and the body and then we were able to like exit out, but the first few weeks, I, that happened and it was like a blank room, but it was like, just like ascending up, and then, um, I was like put in a forest at one point, and then the door, so it was like the room of the FAC (Fine Arts Complex, the building housing the rehearsal spaces) like the floor and then just the door, but like around it was a forest, and I've been to that forest before but I don't know like where, and, it was probably like in another meditation thing, um. But then when I would exit the door, I'd go straight into the city so like the door would open and there'd be a city like within this forest, it was really beautiful, but that whole like, connection, it just reminded me of that, it was really cool.

ADAM: That's how energy feels, every time I would have to cover myself with energy. Bright bright light yeah yeah yeah.

EVAN: The mood had to be right, you know just the, I don't know, the temperature had to be right, all the little small stuff had to be right, where I'd just lay down, I'd really just feel my body just on the floor, just feel like my spine align was touching what's not just really get into tune with everything around me, so I'd be really like in tune with the environment but then I'd shut it all out, so I'd pay, I'd pay less attention to like who's breathing or what or like what really you know, Jake, sometimes I'd phase out from even what Jake was saying, so it was just a really ultra-relaxed state and there were sometimes where that was when the imagery got most vivid was when I was relaxed and I kind of left this kind of just what smells in here, what the temperature is, what sounds, what everything feels like, it was just a relaxed state where I was able to focus on where I was going spiritually. There was one day, um, my dad died of cancer when I was in high school, so the day that was his birthday, February 22, was, I was thinking about him all day and stuff like that, but um, when I did the exercise I like laid down and stuff and envisioned him walking with me. And it was weird 'cause I, 'cause I was like ok, he was six two when he passed, so I was looking, thinking how tall I would be to where he is now and stuff 'cause I'm a huge ogre (laughter), and uh so I thought how tall he would be and stuff and uh, one of my great—one of my weird neurotic greatest fears is I'll forget what his voice sounds like, I can't find a lot of recordings of him from early on so my biggest fear is I'll forget what his voice sounds like, but um. I was able to hear his voice really clearly. And it was nice, yeah....at the beginning I was trying to structure, ok this is what my city is gonna look like, this is what my cafe look like, this is what kind of the archetype will be for the entire thing, but then I just kind of let whatever it is happen, so it was in those states that a lot of 'stuff' happened.

ME: Did you feel anything in the performance? Were there any moments where you felt that you weren't quite yourself, that you were out of body, that kind of thing?

ZACH: As soon as we were on stage it was very much a uh like everything that was bothering me was suddenly gone and I felt like, it was like a like a weird high almost, that like, um, while I was on stage it was such like a, a vivid, uh, connection and there was a lot of energy transfer between all the actors and all

the, uh, the audience, and then, like I would exit the stage and just be backstage even I would feel so like, it was like an immediate, like, drop, like on a rollercoaster of, of this like energy, and then the instant I would go back out it was, uh, right back into that high, and then, we'd have the intermission and it would be ten minutes of, of feeling like really, um, like uh, uh, like anxious and, and not uh fulfilled and, and kind of uh, like, like a wandering feeling almost and then, then we would start again and it was, it was immediate—it was just like back and forth on this spectrum of like feeling completely like alone and drained unto like completely fulfilled and alive, and then, um, yeah, so it was just like this really ping pong feeling, um. But it's hard to describe because I like can't, uh, like I'm never, I never experienced that sort of like high or feeling anywhere else. Um. And so it's very uh, I don't know, um, like it's both energizing and restorative and healing almost.

SHANNON: Yeah, it was just, it was a very comfortable experience to go through, yeah.

ZACH: It's really invigorating.

SHANNON: Yeah, it is, and I just, I don't know. 'Cause, I've never had a stage experience like that. Like I'm always very relaxed and comfortable on stage but this was like something completely different...this was like, we're in a different realm.

ZACH: Yeah, I almost remember like a few times where like we'd be on stage and I'd, I would hear laughter, and I was like, 'Holy fuck, there's people here, what happened? Get out!' (Laughter)

SHANNON: Did we put the TV on?

EVAN: I had a couple moments, like, uh, like during ad libs I'd really, it was funny 'cause like ad libs or like responses like if I'd messed up, or if I had to pause for something, or like hold for applause like, you'd think it would almost take you out of it, but that's when I felt really in the character, which is weird, like not I mean for some other people, like, showing that side of yourself, or having to pause for applause when you're not like acting, you know you're not like doing anything, you're kind of holding for applause. It was really in those moments where I really felt like in the character.

EVAN: It just felt good, I'm just sitting there, kind of in my seat and stuff with a drink in my hand, and I'm just like, I'm just actually George, just listening to this story and interested. Like when he says 'she' it's like 'I'm sorry, "she?"' 'cause I actually do wanna know these things, it was, it was weird. There were some really moments, that was fun, it was definitely, definitely the embodiment of the other self, or something else. Or just going to somewhere else. Whether it be physically or mentally or as the performer, you're just in the zone.

EVAN: As a person onstage like you have these characters and we have these different realms of like the embodiment of the spirit world, or what's us, or what's character, it's just you know, like, the Self, that's like the meeting of th—of those worlds.

ADAM: Right before I went on stage, there's one thing I, I always do. I, I find Andres, and I feel him, I, I don't know if I can describe it.

EVAN: Keep it G-rated.

ADAM: I am! Uh, my skin, it tingled. Like my whole, my whole body tingled right before I went onstage, and I felt like, 'Andres!' and then, it was weird 'cause whenever I was onstage, my nose, I don't know the nasal was on, the nasal cavities was on fire, I don't know why that was the case, I don't know, just, it felt, so much energy just coming out of my face, that I felt, yeah, yeah.

ME: Have you felt any heightened senses or distorted senses?

SHANNON: Mine was heightened and it was my sight, like I could see everything, very clearly, that was going on. Um, which was really nice, but it was only when we were onstage, offstage it didn't happen as much, but onstage I was like, 'I can see everything, I can see everyone, I have control of everything because I can see them, um'. And then afterwards, it just, I went back to my usual, 'Oh I can see things,' but it wasn't as like clear or concise, um, so that was really heightened. And I always felt like, um, there was that heat but it was more like around my heart, like very comforted feeling, but I like lead with that more as a character.

ME: Did the mirror ever have a menacing character to it, did it ever feel like it was getting in your way, or creepy?

ZACH: I remember at one point in time, I saw, like, my wisdom being's eyes in the mirror. That was kinda freaky, um. 'Cause like I, I couldn't ever really get it so that I could see myself in it. I was like mep, I don't know what to do, I'm just like, like pounding my head against a wall, and then, at one point, like I saw, like, like a very vivid purple eye, and I was just like, 'That's not my eyeball', and then it was gone. Then, yeah, and then my mirror broke and then, so I couldn't see a full face anyways, with it 'cause it was kinda fractured, um, but yeah, I, I couldn't get the mirror to really work.

SHANNON: For me, I just saw the city. Or like, not the city but I like, kinda saw the cafe, like the outer side of the cafe, um, when I would use it. And then it would be just like foggy mist, like I could never, it was like, I could see a little bit through it, um, and so I could make out that it was the storefront of the cafe, but it was always like very foggy, to where it was like mystery, like it couldn't go past it but I know there's something there helping me.

EVAN: Yeah, the, the mirror for me is like, whenever I used it, like, I mean, when you think of a mirror, like, you think of reflection, so with mine I was like ok, reflection, like I'd look at it and then I'd always try and like get one of my eyeballs in it, then just look at it like it was like, ooh like maybe if I like focus enough and I'm in my script and I'm like relaxed and in like a good stadium, I can look at my other self, even though I just see the eyeball in the mirror, maybe that's him. So it was kinda, it was kinda like, um, I never felt frightened by it, I never, um, I never tried to treat it like as just like a little, you know, however many cent circle mirror from like a Michael's (a craft chain store) or whatever but I tried to, I tried to respect it, and through the respect came like the mystical aspect of it, as just this whole thing we're doing, this idea that, I don't know if this is verbatim what Jake says, or verbatim what your method that's being developed, this Kanga, is that instead of you know character building, it's more like character digging. Like it's whether this whole embodiment the character or just the certain big traits that you need to nail as performer, instead of, you know, building them or studying them

or researching this role—we're obviously still researching this role and spending time in the text and working—but it's more finding and digging within yourself instead of getting stuff from the outside and building this external structure, it's digging within yourself to find that character or like those embodied traits, and then just bring them to life. So that was kind of, that was, I really liked that, 'cause I was, you know, I'm just a twenty year old actor in his undergrad, ever really thought about that before, or really put much thought to that before. So that was really useful for me, but. Yeah, I tried to res—I just tried to respect the mirror and through that just like that reflection was just kind of the mysterious aspect, and um. It was weird because Jake was like, 'Yeah, just spend time in the text and you know really work you know the character's voice and stuff, especially if you're in lines, get off book, and if you use your mirror, you'll get off book quicker', I was like, 'Yeah, right I'll get off book quicker', but uh, it actually worked. It actually did work for you at least (points to Shannon), it was crazy.

JAKE: I told you!

ADAM: When I looked into it, I didn't really, I only saw myself, I mean, it helped with lines faster, but I think what really clicked with me, like the importance of the mirror, was one time in rehearsal, we were missing somebody, I think it was Shannon, and I put the, the mirror down in Shannon's place, this is when all of us were in the rehearsal space, and I said, 'Oh, this is Shannon!' And as we did the run-through, I looked over, and it still felt like, I felt like there was someone there, like a presence, and I was like, 'Woah, that's pretty real right there'. And it, it had, and then whenever I, I rehearsed with it, like in my lines by myself, it was a presence that I could recognize and like address to, not as an audience, but as someone else. So it became a very, very helpful um location to put my works towards, or to work around.

ME: Any concluding remarks?

ADAM: It was incredibly personal, sometimes too personal, but I felt that's what was needed, to get to where we needed to be, and, yeah, I mean in a sense I was playing two different battles, one in this world with like personal, character, all that, and then there trying, well at the beginning trying to adjust to everything, but then, as soon as one battle was won, the other was a lot easier to conquer, and I'd like to, I'd love to go further with this, I feel it has a lot of, a lot of value.

SHANNON: Through this process I accessed a part of me that I've always wanted to access, but was never able or capable to access, um, so that, that was really refreshing, and I don't know, I just had an immensely positive experience with this.

EVAN: (His eyes grow narrow.) Yeah, yeah.

SHANNON: I just felt very bonded and close with everyone, but I also felt close with myself, and with everything and it's was just, it was very like liberating.

EVAN: I agree.

Appendix B: Practitioner Interviews

ISIS

24 December 2014

But the thing about um faking possession uh like there is even a tradition of it uh in Brazil, uh, *Dar um eque*, meaning to give a, an eque. Eque in Yoruba means a lie. To give a lie. This is a tradition. So what is to give a lie? To give a lie is, um, a performance which can only be um, only gay men are entitled to perform it. And it means to bring down, no? bringing down an Orisha to pretend that you're bringing an Orisha down in a beautiful manner. In a graceful, beautiful manner. So it's absolutely accepted, it's known that person is faking, *Esta dando um eque*, he's giving an eque, but it's done beautifully, so it's accepted, it's fine. There is no problem with it.

But it's, I don't know why and it's curious of course that it's only, uh, only gay men are entitled to, to do this. Now about other people who fake possession, that is so complicated, no? So complicated. Uh. Because at times you see that the person is touched by the spirit, um, and it's trying to, uh, to go through with the process, but it's not managing. So it's not entirely a lie, there is, at times there is a, an element of truth in it, but uh, or it starts in a, in a truthful manner, or it has an element of truth all the way, but it's fake. Um. Yeah, I've seen many people fakin' it. And, like it's even, it's, like, it's strange that I am who I am and that I believe in what I believe, considering that I am such a skeptical person. And, and how many times like I've dealt with people that, uh, that I felt, were faking, and how do, how do you deal with it, and normally for me it's like ok it's fine do you want to fake it? Fake it.

The most interesting aspect of this question is the, the religiously accepted, uh, faking. Um. But it only exists among Brazilians, like I've never seen Cubans referring to it.

This, this optimal, uh, state, highest state of blackout, I, I wonder if it actually exists, Chris. And, I think people are trained to claim that, uh. That that would be the only, uh, that if you are not claiming that, you would be faking, so you have to go to the other extreme by saying you cannot remember a thing, and, uh, that it was a complete blackout. That's very common. I think most, most trances that I've seen, uh, people claim not to remember a thing.

At times like the person is saying something that is not like they are not convinced, but it happens, like it manifests itself after awhile, and they start believing that, ok like even, even if I'm saying this and I'm not entirely sure it's true, maybe it is, maybe. There is a confusion there.

ME: There are, there are some people that do things for their own self-aggrandizement or whatever, but that usually is secondary to the political, um, the political things that need to be played, right?

ISIS: Yeah, yeah, what needs to be done to keep the network, like in its shape in its, in its configuration, uh, otherwise it falls apart. And it's constantly falling apart, no? You can also see it from the other angle, like from the secular, no, like all those classes that you have of African dance, no? Uh, you also have the Afosés, you also, that's another thing, the carnival groups in Brazil that play, um, Candomblé songs and yet they are not mounted, ridden, possessed, they do not enter into trance, no? And these classes that you have in the U.S. as well, a lot, like Orisha dance classes, uh, so that would be fake right? that would be trance in fake, yet it happens that what the person is faking dancing like either at carnival or in these classes, they can be touched by the Orisha. So then it becomes, then it becomes true. From a lie it becomes true.

Yeah even the question of how long can a trance, how long can a person be in trance, you hear stories of people that end up in uh, psych-psychiatric wards when they are in trance, uh, and for them to be taken into a psych wa-psychiatric ward and kept there, like like that trance would last what four five hours at least, like is that possible I guess it is, I've never seen it, but. We do not know.

In terms of the energy of trance, you can tell the difference between an Orisha and a spirit. But if it is, if it is like a premonition or, then I think it's very hard. Yeah and then there is also like the thing that, that I say, like, in trance you can, you can tell the difference between an Orisha and a spirit, it depends, it's like women who fake orgasms, no? If they never had one, how would they know? Then they wouldn't know the difference, and it would be the, the same. Like they, they, there wouldn't be the discerning element. Oh, okay, like an Orisha is com-coming down a much stronger energy and, or a spirit is coming down, a lighter energy or not so over, overwhelming like.

It's closer to the word mounting, like, like there is something on the shoulder itself, like first, like it is on the left shoulder, it comes, the left shoulder comes down a couple of times, it's almost as if, like I'm going to lose my, my balance, and as the left shoulder keeps on being dragged down, it seems that my body is going to enter into a, a, like a circular motion, anti-clockwise, like from, because of the, the left shoulder being brought down, um.

I've heard of many, uh, cases, like in which, uh, as part of initiation, one is taught, uh, or when they first bring down the Orisha, like how to tame it, how to, uh, like you see it in, uh, in Brazil, for instance, like with the aja, with the bell, like they play the bell, and say 'Pele, pele,' meaning, 'Slow, slow', like, 'Come slowly, Orisha', like there is for each person who is bringing down an Orisha there is a jubonna, back in Brazil, like a person taking care of, uh that that person and, uh taking care of the process of trance. We don't have that.

In Brazil, we have this tradition that emerged in the 30's, Umbanda, right? And in Umbanda, like the spirits are organized according to the Orishas but you don't bring an Orisha down. You bring spirits down. Uh, so for instance, the, it's, it's, it's complicated because the, the spirits are all referred to as Caboclos. Caboclo originally would be, like, an Indian spirit. Uh, like it has already been discovered that it comes from Caboclo, which is like a Kongo name for Ancestor, that's, that's actually the reference, because it never made reference of why they were calling, would be calling them Caboclos, no? so instead of Oshun, like it's Cabocla, uh,

saying, it's an Ancestor who, uh, uh was connected to Oshun in a previous life and who's coming, who is mounting uh, a human now. Um. And then there are the Egunguns that you know about, the Egunguns, like Geledes and Egunguns, like ancestral, uh, like with a connection to the Orisha but ancestral.

I'm not sure if I use the word Kanga in the, like the word Kanga came to me in my readings, not in my spiritual teachings. And for me, Kanga means to code something, and by code, I mean to attribute a meaning or power to something that could be, that, that could be nothing, that could be an object, that could be a, so it's creating a, investing magical power into something. That's what I mean by coding. Um, and you have to code and decode. There is the decoding part as well. Um. And by that I mean not, not only a way of, uh, protecting yourself, but also, uh, decoding your own coding, like understanding what it is that you are doing, and and being very conscious of it. Uh, because there, there are like so many different types of fetiches you can make, so many types of like ways that, uh, that you can work, and yet, for me, like one of the most powerful, perhaps the most powerful spell that there is, is the gaze. Um. Which has a name in Candomblé, it's *arara*. It was explained to me by Mae Stella, who is a very well-known Yaborisha priestess in Brazil, I was visiting her in Bahia, and I was, uh, she is a daughter of Ochosi as well—by now she must be in her nineties—and she explained to me using Disney. She asked me, 'Do you know Donald Duck?' and I thought 'Ok where is she going with this?' and she was saying, like, 'You know, like, in the cartoons, when you see the character and, uh, arrows coming out of the, uh, eyes, uh, of that character. This is *arara*. This is what you have to be careful with'. It's also significant because everybody does that, every—everybody is a witch, everybody is performing witchcraft whether they know it or not. Um, and they are not necessarily, most of the times they are not aware of that power, uh, of what they are causing with that ca—with that gaze. And if possible, if you can disarticulate that gaze and avoid it, uh, uh, to, uh, but, but everybody Kanga and de-Kanga.

GAVIN

20 January 2015

When I was younger, I had experiences that I didn't know how to put, put anywhere, that I wouldn't say, like, were a hundred percent, like, possession in any kind of structured way, but definitely felt like the intrusion of another consciousness into my own, and sometimes in a way that felt, like very, like, creative and uplifting and sometimes they felt very counterproductive, and um. So, uh, sometimes you know those experiences, like, happened around, like music, specifically, like, improvising music, um, and uh you know sometimes they were the result of, like, things that I was doing, like, some meditation or, um, you know, like, spending long periods of time without sleeping, or stuff like that. You know, that's just, like, a de facto part of the experience, is that people get possessed, you know, a large part of like what moves it from, like, a praise and celebration ritual to, like, a healing ritual.

I remember the first time I was at a drum, and Oshun came down, it was like in that minute I knew exactly what she was like, because I was watching her take

over, you know, and over a man, she was possessing a man at that point, and like, by the expression on his face and the way he walked around the room and the way he talked, it was like, then I felt I got to know her in some way, in a way that, like, you know, I, I, reading or even understanding anything on an intellectual level would ever provide.

ME: Yeah, he didn't talk to me. And Robert said that was a good thing. Like they always say that, right?

GAVIN: Yeah, and then he wouldn't, like, his Elegua wouldn't leave, he was there for hours afterwards, like I remember he was just standing on the counter in the kitchen.

ME: That happened at the one I was at, too, yeah! Yeah, it was like two hours.

GAVIN: Yeah.

ME: And he was drinking I think like two bottles of rum.

GAVIN: Wow.

There's something about like, sort of weird ideas about theatre or something, believability or suspension of disbelief or presenting a convincing performance or something, which is something different from actually just doing something that's self-evident, on it, it doesn't really matter if somebody believes it or not, 'cause that's about them, not about the performance.

To have had my early, kind of, trance experiences come out of being in clubs or being in, you know, I guess like artistic or entertainment situations, uh, but then to be so drawn to that, to seek out another depth of that in a true tradition, like, but there are things that are really different about that, um, I guess, which is essentially, like, the meaning that it takes on, that the, I think like in the, I feel like within a spiritual tradition, like, my experience is that trance takes on a very specific meaning that's beyond just a, the experience of the individual, it becomes like a collective experience, um. One person's experience becomes a collective experience because of how that trance experience is contextualized, whereas I think like, there's the, and, and I like that and value that for its own reasons and then, you know, in the more, I, like, club experience, like I definitely see people, like, losing their inhibitions, I would say, or like, and I think it's an interesting thing, like, right, like for me my experience, like creatively is that what I try to do is I try to let go and let some larger creative spirit take over, and, like, move through me, and I feel like that when I'm successful in a creative process that's why, that's what I've done. Every ti—every single time. There's never a time where I feel like, 'No, no, I, I did this one on my own, I just used the skills that I have and I just like got in there and did it, and I'm like really happy with what I did'. When I feel like it's successful it's just because I'm not in, I'm out of the way. So that, I mean I think that qualifies as a possession experience, and I think, I've definitely seen people, you know, also having that experience while I perform music, like, for them that they are letting go of their issues or inhibitions, and maybe letting go of like conventional ideas of what it means to interact with music in a nightclub setting. That's a goal, that's an intention that's woven into the music that I do, that I want people to be able to have that experience of like, leaping out of a generic state of approaching at least that small aspect of existence of like the fact that ninety-nine percent of the time it's like you go to a club and just enact a ritual that everybody knows, like, I'm gonna go there and get a drink, then I go over there and there's the band playing and I like to watch the band and maybe I dance

around and to this kind of music I dance like this, like I want to weave that intention of, like, just blowing all of those things out of the water into the music that I do, and how I do it. Um, yeah in the hopes that people can have an experience where they feel like some larger force moves through them in a way that's hopefully like healing or productive, um. And I mean it's also interesting 'cause like, like drugs are such a big part of club experience and how people, you know, like, lose themselves in a public space. Obviously not for everybody but it is built into that, and um, so that obviously also colors that a little bit, like I've seen people totally lose it, but I feel that often like drugs are involved in that.

Beyond, more than being a religion or even a spiritual system it really is, like, a scientific system, I mean a set of, um, like, ways to connect energy, you know, it's like a, a, sort of like ever-expanding vocabulary of how to connect energy and work with energy, to me like a very scientific system, and it's scientific in a, in a practical and, like, meaningful way, and, and like a hol-like a holistic way. Whereas I think may-like sort of like western ideas of science, although they pretend to be objective are actually like inscribed within a kind of sym-limited idea about how the world is, um, so, um, you know I think there's that and I think there's, there's an interesting thing that happens, too, with, like the what you're talking about, like, sort of like techniques, techniques of ecstasy, and then then like the meaning from which those teek, tech-or the context from which those techniques emerge and the meaning that those techniques, like, inscribe within that context, um. 'Cause I know, for example, like, in music, what I've noticed, like, just in pop music over the last, you know, maybe fifteen years is that people started to, you know originally sort of, there's certain melodic devices or uh rhythmic devices would emerge out of the meaning that somebody wanted to put into a, a song or a piece of music, um. So they would, they would, there would be a meaning that they wanted to convey and express and out of that a technique would emerge, which would fairly reliably cause a certain react-reaction in, in a person that heard that. Maybe an emotional reaction or a spiritual reaction or something. And that because I mean because the because music is inscribed within a capitalist production model, um, over time those techniques became like teased out, so the mea-the meaning became less important and simply just getting the energetic result became more and more important, so that I feel like pop music over the last ten years really relies on, um, just like pushing these buttons that make, you know, that have sort of like proved over time generally make people react a certain way or provoke a certain reaction. Um. But there's something that, you know, there is something that is important about the holistic aspect of how that stuff works for example with drumming and singing that even though there are tech beat of this drum, you know, that tend to bring out trance phenomena, or, yeah, certain types of singing or words that like, when that is removed from the context and the meaning, it doesn't operate in the same way. It operates in a, in a different. So that that I guess, I suppose, using a western scientific method and isolating the technique in a way that maybe you would isolate a you know a some kind of atom or some component part of a, um, of a scientific system doesn't, you lose, as you said, just like you would in a quantum experiment, you lose a bulk of the um yeah, meaning or value, by just isolating the whatever the technique is, the technique isolated from its context and meaning is not the same thing as the technique as it exists within a context and meaning.

I'm not so interested in even analyzing that so much, I'm more interested in practicing it, and I think that's, you know, that's the value of also like a spiritual thing is that, that there is this aspect of practice that um is different from like a sort of like in that like analyzing things or like trying to understand things, that you just simply have these things that you do, and then you just do them.

I lost consciousness and I don't know if that was the intensity of the ritual or if that was something else but I know that, um, in that moment I heard a voice that said, 'Something big is coming'. Right before I lost consciousness. And I've lost consciousness before, and it didn't feel the same. It felt related. definitely, but it felt like there was something else happening, and when I regained consciousness I felt very strongly that there was another presence with me. I, I felt very aware of myself and I didn't feel, even I would say, possessed, it felt like I was in , I don't know, it was somewhere in the middle there. It felt like the way that I was moving my body wasn't—was the way a very, somebody else, would move their body, there was like a much, there was a much stronger, um, presence, there was something else in my body. But by the time I became aware of it, it was on its way out, and there was part of me that really wanted to hold onto that, but I could feel, you know, all, almost like, yeah, I mean, like cross-fading between two records, I could feel, you know, that thing, sort of dissipating and just my own normal consciousness coming back. It's like waking up, like waking up from being asleep, you still are holding onto these weird shreds of dreams and stuff.

ROBERT

4 February 2015

ME (we're talking about beading while we're making elekes): But he said it was something like it kind of, like, was a trance-inducing thing, to make them. That he felt like he was going other places sometimes.

ROBERT: Yeah, it's called boredom. That's the trance. Tedious. If tediousness is a trance, then, yes, that's what it is.

ME: That's, that's what I'll do, I'll open a trance studio.

ROBERT: Yes, what trance dance are you doing tonight? Tedious, it's called tedious, and you're even being more tedious by asking me.

ME: But first, if you'd like to get started, count the coffee beans, I'll be with you in forty-five minutes.

ROBERT: And I may or may not come back in, according to how I feel.

You're not talking about trance, you're talking about possession, is there a difference? There probably isn't a difference...well, I don't know, what are we defining trance as? Just, you know, young people at burning man? You know just (makes dancing gestures) just doing that? I mean, although, listen, I remember, now, god, this is gonna sound so superficial, but it wasn't for me, I remember the disco days, I would dance all night long, and I would go into a space, where I would be lost, in quotes. So that's trance. I've walked on fire when I've been totally conscious, but I had to've been in a trance to, like, all of a sudden, like, 'Oh, I'm on the other side of this fire pit, and I just walked on it, oh. Well, that was weird, how did I get over here'. You know what I mean? So that had to be some kind of trance, as opposed to possession, right? And it was group, it was

done in a group, disco dancing, rave, you know, burning man, it's all done in a group, well possessi—is possession always done in a group? I guess it is. 'Cause why would you get possessed if there wasn't other people to observe or be a part of it? So yeah, it's all done in a group, of course it is.

Yeah, 'cause, possession, what's the reason for it if it's not for the Other?

And so the elders can say, 'Ah, yes, of course, now, he is, that is Obatala, so now everything is good'. Or whatever it is, you know what I mean. I think there is a communal aspect to it.

I mean, because, okay, so trance, so I have, you know, walked on fire and felt that which is kind of trance—like, you know, of course, felt you know, channeled, in the, from the new age days, but I was, I was taught that by you know, uh, someone, this instructor I had in Hawaii, who told me how to channel. She saw what was happening but she took me and said, 'This is how you control it, this is how you do it', you know, and there's a different kind of thing, it's like you see your, it's like you're literally stepping aside and letting, you know, that entity come into you, that's the way I, whereas the Orisha, it was like, people say, 'Well, I don't remember anything', well, I do, I remember. I don't understand the not remembering part. But I mean, I do. I, you know, all, all I remember is, it just happening, I felt compelled to do these movements and to do these things, and then something kind of took over me from doing these movements and doing these things that I felt compelled to do. And then, and then I was, like an old-fashioned TV set, and you're in, say you're inside the box, the TV box. Remember when TV's were in, like, boxes? Like furniture? They were furniture. You know? And I'm inside of there and here's the TV screen and I'm looking out, into the living room or the kitchen or whatever. I literally remember that, that's all I remember. That's the only way I know how to describe it. And not really having control over, and not caring about having control over what I'm doing, but it's not me, it's just, just doing, whatever You know, I'm just kind of observing, I'm observing as, you know, this is taking place. That's what it felt like.

Now, being possessed at like a misa with what I considered a Palo spirit, now that was very different, it felt very rough to me, and I, and again I felt compelled to do things that I really didn't wanna do, like crawl on the floor or like, you know, put a bur-burned cigar over my skin, but I did it anyway.

ME: It was like, there was like, a wind machine kinda starting, like a wir-wir-wir, like—

ROBERT: And that's your experience.

ME: Yeah, and then something kind of like, mmmmm, very dark and confusing and hazy, and then there was kind of like on the other side.

ROBERT: It just happened.

ME: Yeah.

ROBERT: I know that I remember saying to myself, and I think it was because I'd had that experience with channeling that, 'I'm gonna let this happen, you know, I want, I want this to happen and I'm gonna let it happen, 'cause I'm not scared of it'.

So, um, so there's an aspect to me that thinks, 'Well, are they just bullshitting?' You know? About what they're experiencing because they don't want to admit, in the community, that, 'Oh, no, I don't remember a thing'. Because is it a, is there a community sort of pressure to act a certain way, is that another—is that another aspect of possession? As we're talking here, let me stay in the camera view. There's almost like a pressure, 'Well, okay, I've got to, this is the way, you know I've got to get possessed, or I've got to do this and that'. Well, okay, so let's think about this. So, don't you think that feeling the Holy Spirit in fundamentalist Christian church, or the, or the African-American experience of getting, of falling out and getting the Holy Spirit, that's possession. I think it is, I'm sorry. But there's a communal, kind of pressure that like, 'Oh, she hasn't gotten touched by the Holy Spirit yet'. So we've gotta go, okay how do I, (mimics shaking) ah! how do I start to do that? You know what I mean? By watching the older people do it. 'Oh, so that's how they do it', do you think that's that in our community with people that are brought up in the religion? Where they say, 'Oh, so that's how Oshun acts so that's how I'm gonna do', I don't know. But does that make it wrong? Does that mean they're not possessed when that happens?

ME: I don't know if anyone does this, like, if there are a group of elders that will, like, judge whether this possession is full, or whether this one's a partial, you know, or these kinds of things, or if there even are any measures, like, that.

ROBERT: Oh, I think, I think so.

ME: Are there?

ROBERT: Mm hm.

ME: And that the by the one the one that by far the one that's valorized is the one where the person is completely unconscious, and feels like they're drowning—

ROBERT: Oh, I think so. I think there is that. I think you have to have that actually. 'Oh, yes, it was certified as real by so-and-so', I've heard that before actually.

ME: Oh, okay. Who's the, who's the governing board of these things?

ROBERT: Somebody who's older in the religion.

ME: Oh, okay. Really, and they certify?

ROBERT: Well. Hm. Not in a western way, like you don't get a diploma for Christ sake!

ME: 'We're here to check on a possession, ma'am.'

(Talking about the woman who taught him to channel) She said there really are very few people that could do it. She said and that she said you know the way she said the way I put it she said, 'You can look at it any way you want to, you know, there's people that think that this is just, you know, horse crap or whatever, you know, that I do', but she said, 'You know', and she said, 'The way I look at it', she said, 'Spirit uses people who are a little bit theatrical, and you're a little bit theatrical', she said, 'You have to be', she said, 'You know, just, you know', I, she said, that's what she said I believe. She said, 'So why not? Just let it go'. Just it's about just letting it go. Stepping aside literally, so you do this meditation of like literally, you know whatever you want to visualize, and you s—you know, you're like going along on this road, or whatever, and you just step aside, you know, and ask that entity to come in, you're stepping outside so they can come in, and then kind of just let go with it. You know, and at first, with her, and this is the, traditionally kind of sometime the way it is with Orisha, too, you just kind of, you might just not do anything, or you might just like say nothing or you might say

stupid shit or you might, I don't know what, but there's somebody there to guide you through it. See, I think we have less of that in our community, partly because of a stigma, so it, so our so, let me, so again, let me just throw that out to you, so, you know, it's some, you know, Latin godparent who may not, who's not even an English, first-language English speaker, and sees somebody like me, their white godson, get possessed, are they gonna tell them how to go through it? Probably not. You know? But they might. You know, they should. See, I think in Candomblé I think they do tell them how, there are elders that tell them, 'Okay, this is the way you move, this is the way you dance, you know, this is the way the Orisha dance'. Traditionally and again this may be se—you tube secrets, I hope not, um, you know, you're really, the Orisha is supposed to be taught. They're supposed to be taught. There's some houses that believe that you just don't come down knowing. You have to be taught. You know, to act a certain way, to say certain things, there's certain ritual words, and you've heard them. You know. When they first come down.

See, the thing is there's all kinds of stories out there to regale the people. 'Oh, yes, and she, and she wouldn't have known to, uh, did that, it had to be, blablabla'. Well, I had that at mine. When Oshun (scare quotes) possessed me. 'Robert wouldn't have known how to do that and his Oshun did so and so'. I, and I can tell you what they are, you know what I mean? Bec—I mean, I would tell you, but I'm not gonna tell you tube folks or whatever we're doing here, you know, about that, um. So there, you know, but see the, the, it's but it's almost becomes like a status then, you know, you, you see what I'm saying, we're getting back to the socio-economic, 'Yes, our, yes my daughter gets, uh, possessed, and she did, she didn't know anything about it'. You know whatever. You know. See what I'm saying, though? Am I just being an awful white guy? Talking about that, I mean, you know, but I think that's it. I really do, I think there is an aspect to that and I, I think it's important that it's talked about. I think there is an aspect to that. I've got something you don't have. Essentially.

8 February 2015

So the definition of trance versus possession. Trance, there's a contr—, you know, you're in control of trance, you can move in and out of trance, you can accept or not accept going into trance, you can create a space to go into trance. Tra—meditation is trance, Whereas possession, even though you may have a choice, and may create that choice to let another aspect, another personality, another energy that is not normally you come in, once it happens, then the choice is taken away from you, that the choice is taken away from you, I believe. And you just, and that you have to just go with it to its completion, whatever that completion is, of a possession, trance you can come out of, you know, that's what I think. That's what I think.

CARLA

13 April 2015

I grew up, since I was, as far as I can remember, with this amazing grandmother who, you know, was barely literate, uh, and uh, you know worked very hard her

entire life, just like the family, right? and uh she would do these, these sessions, but then in the sessions she would be um, like a *Preto Velha*, like, you know, the old, black slave, kind of, you know, gendered as female, um, and uh, and also, like, a daughter of Yemonja, because in Umbanda, uh, we believe that you can't channel the Orixá itself, uh, because you would literally, like explode or something, like that's kind of the belief, so. So there's all these, like, basically, it's not, well, they are Eguns, right? They are Eguns that belong to a certain falange, to a certain family, so, you know, but each, each one is specific, so you know someone's Preto Velha is not the same Preto Velha as ours. This is a, this is an Egun, right? And um, and so, for me it was always like, there was my grandmother, and then we had the circle and the ceremony and she put her scarf on, and for the other one, there was an Indian, you know, we do, there's an Indian, there's a Preto Velha, there is a Yemoja, and so, you know, she would spin, but it's less, there's no drumming, there's no dancing, they, we, we pray and we sing in a circle and she would spin and she would you know receive the entity. And so for me there was never a question of, like, she never remembered anything, my grandmother. So, um, so for me there was never a doubt that, you know, that that was the, that that wasn't real. Right? That that wasn't, 'cause it wasn't her. Especially because the things that she would talk about sometimes were things that my grandmother would, didn't even know existed.

Maybe in the last decade, when we did it, often, and this was after I did psychedelics, which is very interesting, so after I did psychedelics, every time I would be in a ceremony, I would start like (makes heaving motions), and I'd start feeling like, 'Oh my god, I'm having a bad trip'. Um, and I thought, you know. Obviously I like trance because I have issues of control.

And every time I go to see someone, 'cause there's this thing where you go just to get a, a blessing, you know, so you get in line, because now we don't, my grandmother, uh, passed away, um, six months prior to my mother, so it was pretty hard-core, like, uh, all the matriarchs, 'cause my mother was the eldest daughter, and uh, the sh, you know, she was kind of you know the matriarch, and then my grandma, and then my grandma had been sick with diabetes for years, so even prior to that, I think the last time we had a session was like 2009 or something like this.

When I was doing my master's, which was years ago in the late nineties, um, it was an MA, but I also kind of did the work of an MFA, but, um, I um was writing papers, and I wanted to write a paper about Umbanda, and I started researching, and the more I researched, and I fell into like, you know, the sort of Western, you know the Western sort of paradigm, the Western lens, I, um, I just kind of like, I don't, I don't want to write about it, like I did not want to think that it was some kind of psychotic, like, experience, I believe in spirits and I just didn't want to write about it. So then I wrote more from like a, more sociological sense, about ancestry, and how Umbanda there is kind of, this uh, you know this, almost invented ancestry that is so much about, you know, kind of, embracing those that have been completely, you know, oppressed through history, so it's a, it's a weird way, we're like white people and we have, you know, these Ancestors, that, you, if you look from US identity politics it's very problematic, but whatever, it is what it is, and, you know. And so then I wrote about that, uh, and I just tried to not, yeah, I couldn't, it was too, like I didn't want to deconstruct it, or, you know, to have

some kind of doubts about my belief, um, and uh, but I did, I did, I did study a little bit of music in trance, I remember writing about that and researching, you know, and I was involved in the rave scene for a long time, again since my mid-twenties, um. So for a very good six years I participated in, the, we were the, the, we were the Full Moon Gatherers, and this was like at the height of the, um, the early nineties, the rave scene, like we went to a few raves in L.A., and then, um, we called them Candy Raves, and then, um, basically we had this kind of neo-pagan, you know, gathering, with electronic music but we didn't call it rave. And we would go to the Mojave Desert every full moon, for six years! Ok? That's what I knew of the desert. So the desert for me was this space, that's why I couldn't adapt to living in the desert, you know, I just, for me it was this liminal space, that you can't be in it for too long, like, it's you know.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Performer Questions

Section 1. Phenomenological

How did you find the rehearsal process?

Did you feel safe (i.e., not entering into psychological, physical, or spiritual territories where you felt uncomfortable)?

Can you describe any moments that you didn't feel safe?

During the course of the rehearsal process, did you ever feel as though you were entering an altered state of consciousness? Can you describe how you experienced it with your senses? Can you describe your thoughts? Can you describe your movements?

Some of the exercises were more psychological in nature (where we would play with aspects of identity); did you find that these techniques were significantly different from other acting exercises? Physically, did it feel different (and can you describe how it did feel)? Emotionally? Intellectually?

Some of the video techniques were designed to capture your raw and immediate responses. When you see yourself in these clips, after multiples viewings in rehearsals, in the presence of an audience, do you feel more vulnerable (by this, I mean exposed, uncomfortably exposed, as if you were showing too much skin) than with other video images of yourself, or less? Why?

How does vulnerability manifest itself in the body and the mind?

Section 2. Psychoanalytic

How much do your own obsessions and desires influence how you perceive the world?

Did you ever feel as though the spectators' expectations of you, or the other performers' expectations, affect your ability and strategies for the external expression of your emotions and thoughts?

When you feel as though you are leaving your body, going outside of yourself, entering into an ecstatic state, do you easily give yourself over to these states, or do you fight them? Do you have a method for proceeding in these states? Can you explain your process?

How did the presence of the audience change your experience of going out of body, and/or your process for going into an altered state?

Appendix C: Interview Questions

In most rehearsal processes and formal performance events, it is common for personal demons, past traumas, and psychological issues to come up. Examples would be issues of gender, forgotten memories, aspects of your character you might consider to be personal defects. Did any of these come up during this process? Can you describe?

Do you feel the experience made you more or less aware of personal desires and obsessions? If more, can you name these? Name or describe?

Section 3. Ethnographic

How would you define spell? Have you ever been under a spell? Describe. Have you been under a spell during this project? Describe. How would you define trance? Have you ever been in a trance? Describe. Have you been in a trance during this project? Describe. Did your definition of spell and/or trance change during the project? If so, how?

During the performance, did you feel as though you were entering into an altered state of consciousness? Can you describe?

Were there moments in the process where you felt like you were under a spell (or outside of yourself)? What were they? What were they? Do you need the word spell

For some of the rehearsals, I did spirit cleanings on all of the performers. What was this experience like? What sensory impressions do you remember, and what were your thoughts, if you remember them? How did this affect the subsequent work?

Did you ever think that you were in contact with an entity, or a consciousness, that you had not encountered before? Can you describe the entity? Can you describe your experience and impressions?

How can your thoughts and feelings be manipulated? Have you ever imagined that your own thoughts and feelings could manipulate others?

Did you ever see yourself outside of yourself? What did you see?

Practitioner Questions

Section 1. Phenomenological

Can you tell me about your most interesting experience(s) with possession?

Have you ever been possessed? Can you describe what it feels like?

Have you ever been under a spell? Can you describe what that feels like? (Alternately, have you ever cast a spell on someone?) In terms of the internal experience of being under a spell, is there a difference between Palo and Lucumí? Can you describe?

What are the physical signs of possession? Of being under a spell?

Section 2. Psychoanalytic

The elders say that a priest/ess cannot read divination for someone they have had sex with (or are attracted to). How does that attraction affect a reading? Are there other things that can affect a reading in this way?

What is your definition of ego? Personality? Is there a difference, for you? Is it possible that someone's ego can be so strong that they are faking possession and don't even know it? Have you seen this happen? If so, can you describe? And can you theorize why someone would fake a possession (i.e., besides status, what would they be getting out of it?)

Are spells more effective on practitioners than on aleyos (outsiders)? Please explain why or why not?

Section 3. Ethnographic

I've heard the word "Kanga" used to indicate a spell or a work. Do you know the word? Have you heard this word? Where and in what context? What is the difference, in your mind, between a spell or a work? When does "working the spirit" become brujeria?

Some initiates have reputations for faking spirit possession (this is knowledge that I've acquired from confidential sources). Can you recount specific instances, where this has happened (keeping in mind, of course, that confidentiality will be respected and observed whenever requested).

There are some studies of Yoruba-descended communities that suggest that some rituals are not just sacred rites, but also can be ways for the community to reinscribe social relations. I'm thinking here of some of the things I've seen at misas, where for example an aunt of an unruly teenager might become mounted

Appendix B: Practitioner Interviews

by an ancestor spirit who will discipline the teenager publicly. Do you think this is this possession? What are the signs that make this a possession?

What are the differences (if any) between total possession, or that where the initiate is half aware? (Here I'm really wondering more about difference in terms of how it affects the community).

How does the ego sneak its way in when a santer@ is reading (Obi specifically, but shells too and chamalongos for the paler@)? What are the visible where you can tell this is what is happening? Are there other signs, internally or in the physical world, that suggest this is what is happening?

What are the differences between possession in Lucumí, Palo Monte, and espiritismo? Do ancestors/muertos/eggún play a role in all possession?

What are some of the more powerful love spells that you know?

Has someone ever put a spell on you, or done a work on you? Can you tell me about it? How could you tell that it was a spell?

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook

I present these next pages as field notes, as it were, that are both fictional and autobiographical, reflective and reflexive, where I am writing another character into the narrative, weaving another persona into the story. This is told not from the point of view of the Ritual Director, but the Sorcerer. The Sorcerer is watching and observing from the same field, and, like the Ritual Director, is part of the equation, but unlike the Ritual Director, is not interested in niceties; the dead have been waiting to have this conversation for a very long time.

There is a narrator, and a found object, the notebook, and they are entangled. The narrator is not entirely reliable, and the object is obscured in parts. At times, the narrator's transcription of the obscured notebook pages are incomplete, or do not quite match up to the evidence before our eyes. This is in the spirit of Marcel Duchamp's *Étant donnés* (Philadelphia Museum of Art: 2015), and Robert Gober's 2005 installation work on 911 (Yablonsky: 2014). It is a partial look into a world that is almost accessible, but still, 'everything about it resists interpretation' (Gonzalez: 2010, 63). It has been constructed, partially erased, and partially reconstructed, to offer a world that invites the reader in 'to be seduced by gaping holes in the text/ile of written descriptions' (Blocker:

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook

2004, xi). This *Sorcerer's Notebook* contains the details of my methodology for studio work. This text on methodology is also performing, with the intention of creating a charmed effect.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook

The Sorcerer's Notebook

I used to live in the future, and everything I wrote about and talked about was in the past. But something happened to me, something extraordinary, and after this happened, I became locked in the present, and this is where I live now. So it is difficult for me to write this story, about something that happened, instead of about what is happening right now. It may get slippery sometimes. Everything is prone to getting slippery sometimes.

There is a notebook, a peculiar notebook, and this is how I found it, and what happens after I find it.

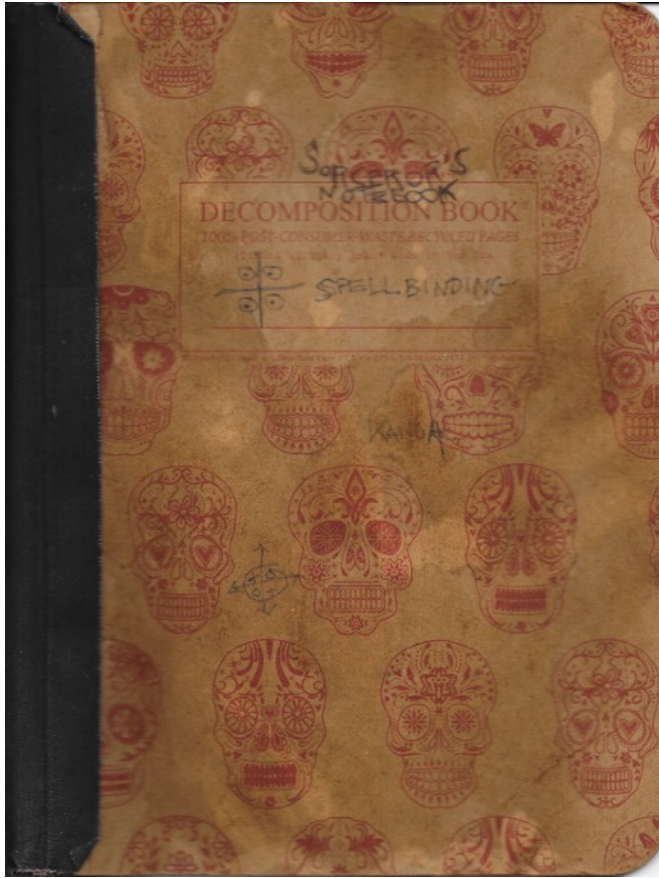
There is this day, not long ago, but long enough that it feels far away already, when I wake up in the morning on this day and I am making a coffee on this day and my dog is getting anxious on me, trying to convince me that we need to be outside and throwing things in the yard, that I am interrupted in this blurry morning thinking by a tap tap tapping at my door.

I jump like a grasshopper. The night before, I had a divination from my godmother, and I won't tell you what she said except I will say it came with a number that meant that I should not open the door when I do not know who is on the other side. She looked me in the eye and she said, 'Whatever you do, do not open that door,' so for me to hear this tapping here and now of all places and times was spooky.

The dog. The dog is not alarmed, not in the least, but has decided to lie down near the door and lay her head down, she is not like this, she does not get calm at the sound of knocking, so I know there is a problem here, because she is behaving like everything is just fine and like the one on the other side of the door is me.

If I am on the other side of the door, I don't want to meet me, not like this, I would like it to be somewhere neutral, like a public place, a cafe, so we are free to leave if we find we do not get along. There are so many good reasons not to open the door this morning. So I wait, I wait a long time, I throw things with the dog in the back yard and I make more coffee and then more still, and when I am sure there is no one there, I open the front door, and I look down, now I am looking down, when I am looking down I see this:

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



The title captures my attention, *Sorcere's Notebook*, and the line below, *Spellbinding*. I take it to the kitchen and sit with this curious volume of I don't know what. There is some red writing, something about decomposition, and the cover, like the rest, is not quite unreadable, but not entirely here, either. There certainly are pages that are beyond legibility.

I give my morning to it. I fall into a spell. Perhaps all reading is a spell. And this particular book seems to be written and presented to produce a mysterious effect. I feel a threat, the threat of being placed under an irrecoverable spell. And I like it.

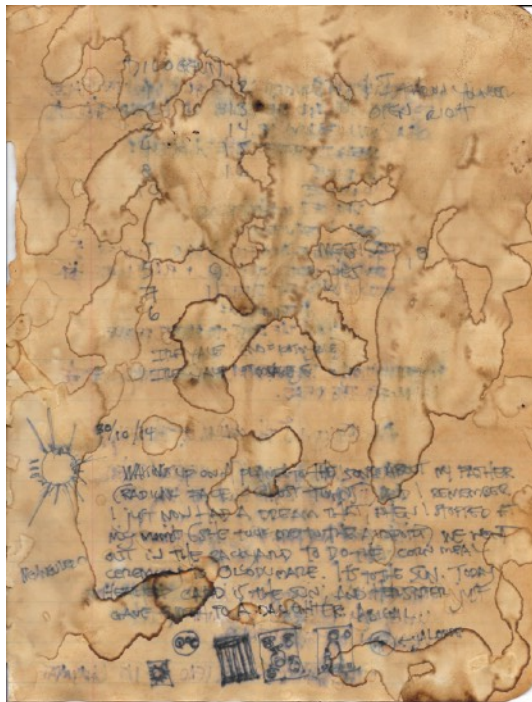
In order to read someone else's words part of your mind has to quiet down. This is a trance. It really is as simple as that. Trance is common, as common as sunlight, or salt, or coffee, which I

decide I need more of. And a little cigar. Sometimes the dog will smoke with me. This is one of those times.

That was the day that everything changed, that I became tense—haha—and now live in the present tense. Because what happened to me might happen to you, I will transcribe this volume, and that is the purpose of my writing this. I am the transcriber of a book written by the scribe. It needs transcription, because it is unreadable, and because I am already a natural medium, and this is another act of mediumship. The notebook appears to be written in trance. This transcription is written in trance. It is best if you give yourself over to this, and let yourself fall under while you read. In this way we are all in trance, in this way we are speaking to each other, in this way, time is not what it used to be.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook

This is page one:



Diloggún

XXXXXX

XXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXX

XXXXXX

Olodumare

sun

daughter

XXXXXX

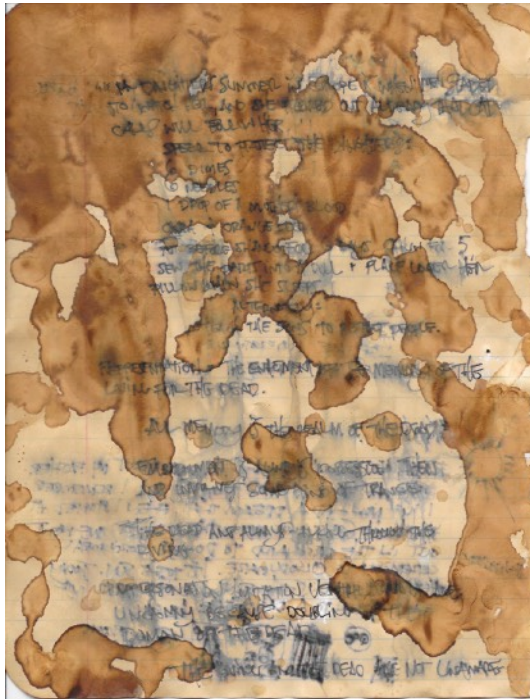
I don't recognize most of the words, but the word *diloggún*, that is what we use to tell stories of ourselves using cowrie shells. Some say it is future-telling, but it is really not, it is reading patterns that are present at the moment the shells fall. Divination is really not about the future, it is about the present. If you know where you are, you have a better idea of where you are going. The future is full of ghosts, you can see them from here, but they tend to change when you get closer.

Next on the page there are also some doodles. I will not comment. I cannot draw at all but I can draw better than that.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook

The next page is totally destroyed, and then something more legible.

First there is what might be a recipe, but it is obscured, until we get to the middle of the page:



XXXXXX

XXXXXX

Representation – the engagement of the memory of the living for the Dead.

All Memory is the realm of the Dead:

Embodiment is always possession, then, and involves some kind of trance.

The Dead are always talking through the Living.

XXXXXXXXXX doubling XXXXXXXX domain of the Dead.

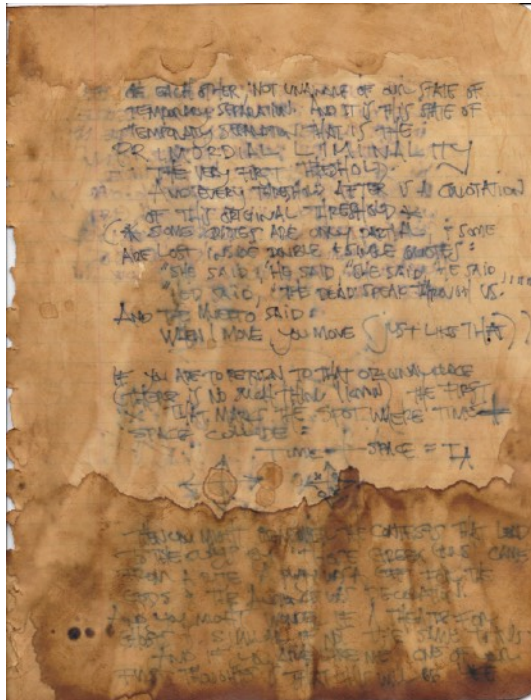
The Living and the Dead are not Unaware

Memory belongs to the Dead, any impersonation, indeed, any representation, refers to memory, and this means that anyone who makes something that is a representation of something else, a drawing or a story or a word in a written language, is in the realm of memory, and everyone is in the realm of memory sometimes, so everyone is working with the Dead.

The Dead haunt the present as much as the past and the future.

There is more on the next page:

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



of each other, not unaware of our state of Temporary Separation. And it is this state of Temporary Separation that is the PRIMORDIAL LIMINALITY

The Very First Threshold.

And every threshold after is a quotation of this original threshold.*

(*Some quotes are only partial, & some are lost inside double & single quotes:

"She said, 'He said,'" she said, 'he said,

"he'd said, 'the Dead speak through us.'""

And the Muerto said:

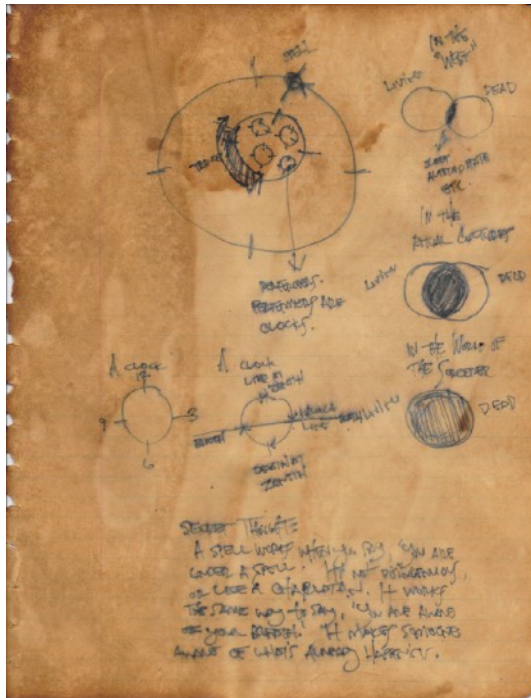
When I move you move (just like that))

If you are to return to that original place (there is no such thing I know), the first 'x' that makes the spot where time + space collide:

$$\text{TIME} + \text{SPACE} = \text{TLA}$$

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook

What comes next is the first of many graphs, and I will try to place my transcription right so you can read it, so you can see the same things I do. At first it is baffling to me, and next it is a little mad, but then it is familiar, like he is mapping something I saw in a dream once.



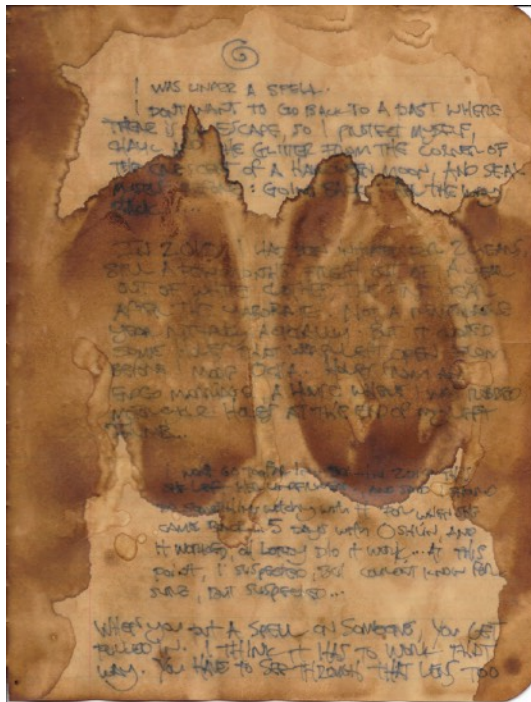
Secret Thought:

A Spell Works when you say, 'You are under a spell.' It's not Disingenuous, or like a Charlatan. It works the same way to say, 'You are aware of your breath.' It makes someone aware of what's already happening.

Elders have been telling me things, things for years, about shadows, sometimes describing what they see when they are seeing Dead Ones behind me. We bring things from one world to another, we tie things from one world to another, everything we do is a Kanga. This was surprising then to me to see this laid out graphically, the world of the Living and the Dead, and I know now this has something to do with me. This is a story about me, a future version of myself writing to me in the present, from the future to the present, or from the present to the past, this is me and this is not me writing this, and this is not exactly me reading this. I, whatever that might mean, continue to read...

Spell	In The "West"	
Living	Dead	
Trance	Sleep Altered State Etc.	
	In The Ritual Cultures	
Performers	Living	Dead
Performers Are Clocks		
	In The World Of The Sorcerer	
A Clock	A Clock	
12	Life At Zenith	
9	3	Living
	Kalunga Line	Dead
	Birth	Death
6	Death At Zenith	

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



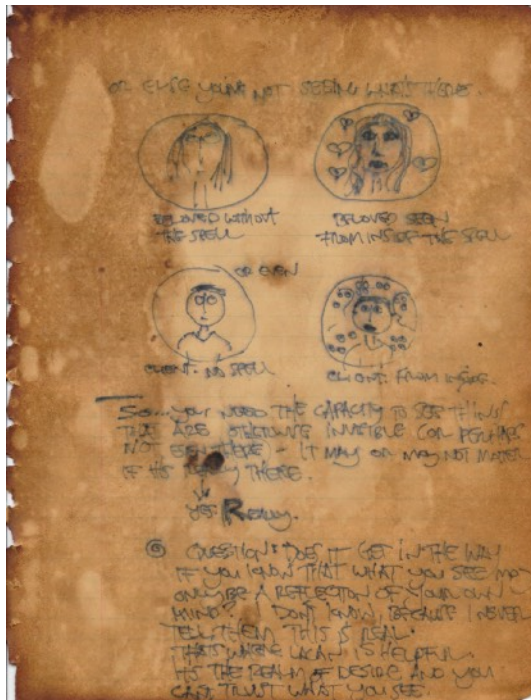
I was under a spell.

I don't want to go back to a past where there is no escape, so I protect myself, chalk and the glitter from the corner of the crescent of a Halloween Moon, and seal
XXXXXXX
XXXXXXX

do something witchy with it for when she came back...5 days with Oshún, and it worked, oh Lordy did it work...at this point, I suspected, but couldn't know for sure, but suspected...

When you put a Spell on Someone, you get pulled in. I think it has to work that way. You have to see through that lens too

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



or else you're not seeing what's there.

Beloved without
The spell

Beloved seen
from inside the spell

or even

Client. No spell.

Client. From inside.

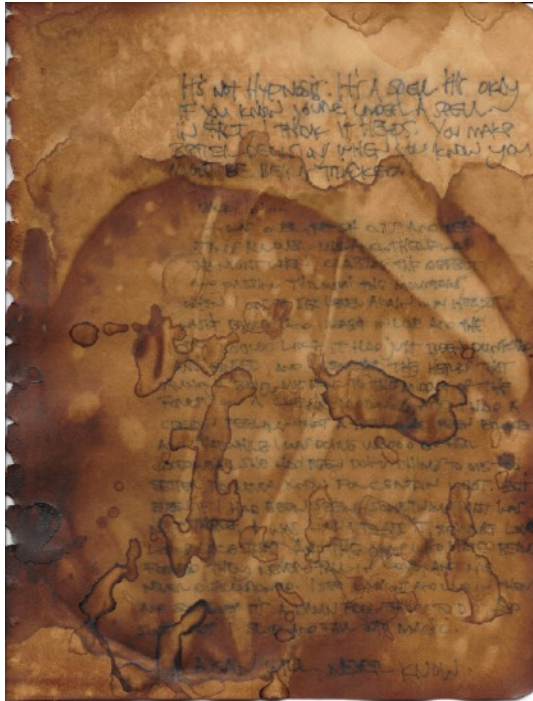
So...you need the capacity to see things
that are otherwise invisible (or perhaps
not even there) – it may or may not matter
if it's really there.

Yes. Really.

Question: Does it get in the way
if you know that what you see may
only be a reflection of your own
mind? I don't know, because I never
tell them This is Real.

That's where Lacan comes back.
In the Realm of Desire and you
can't trust what you do see.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



It's not Hypnosis. It's a Spell. It's okay
if you know you're under a spell.
In fact, I think it helps. You make
better decisions when you know you
are be being tricked.

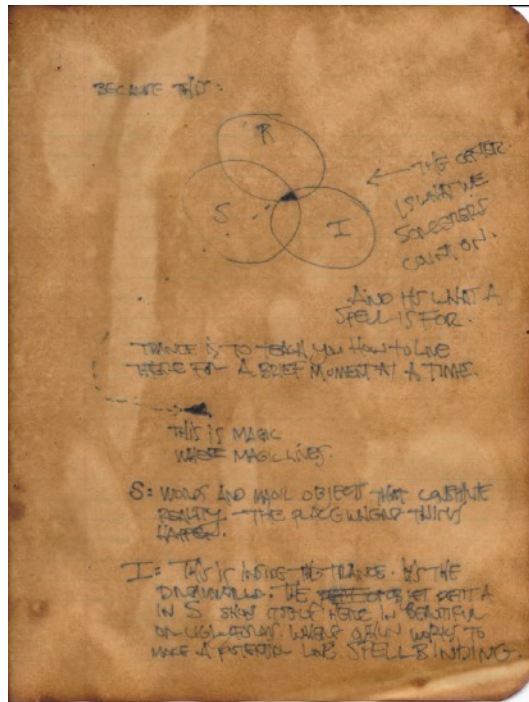
XXXX

XXXXXXX

XXXXXXX

NEVER KNOW.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



Because this:

R
S I

The center
is what we
Sorcerers
count on.

And it's what a
Spell is for.

Trance is to teach you how to live
there for a brief moment of time.

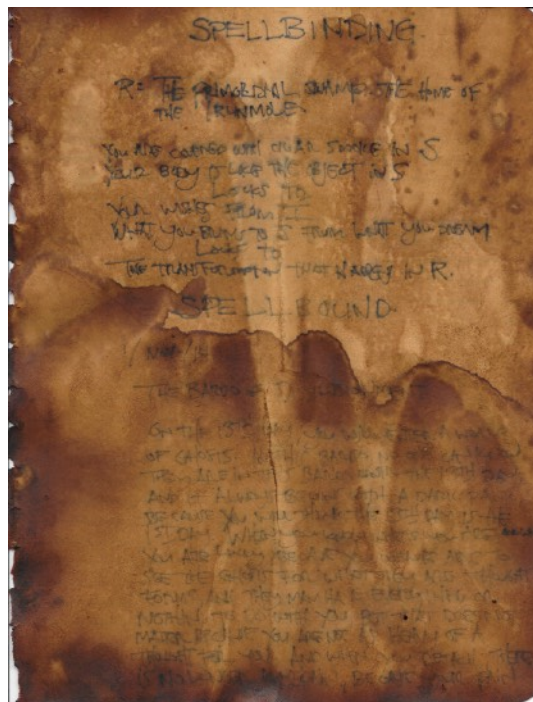
This is Magic

Where Magic Lives.

S: Words and Magic Objects that Constitute
Reality – the place where things
happen.

I: This is Inside the Trance. It's the
DreamWorld. The objet petit a
in S shows itself here in beautiful
or ugly forms. Where Oshun works to
make a potential Love SPELLBINDING.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



SPELLBINDING.

R: The Primordial Swamp. The Home of the Irunmole.

You are covered with cigar smoke in S

Your body is like the object in S

Locks to

Your wishes from I

What you bring to S from what you dream

Locks to

The transformation that happens in R

SPELLBOUND.

XXXXX

XXXXX

XXXXX

XXXXX

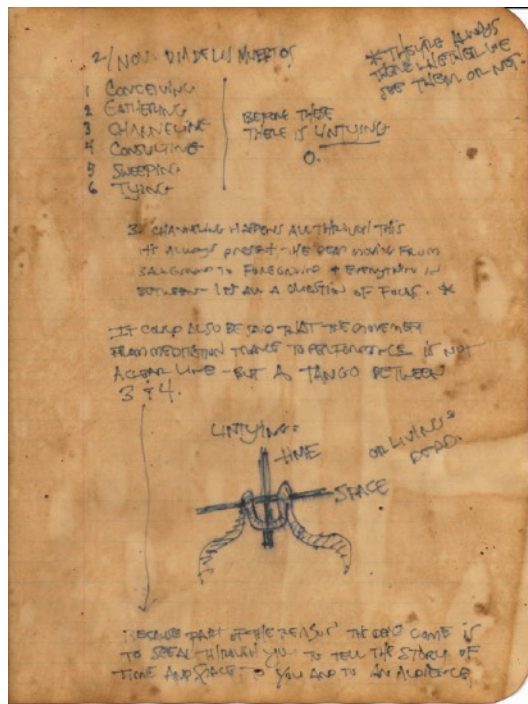
XXXXX

The dog grabs my hand, and leads me to the door. Back to the door. There is no tap-tap-tapping. I open the door, there is no one there. But there are shadows. There are two shadows, a human figure and a dog. The shadows move when we do, when we move the shadows move, and I do the proper thing, I invite them in, and we sit, and we look at each other, and time passes and we don't even notice that the next day is almost here.

When I come to, I am in bed, there is the dog at my feet. I make coffee, these days they blend into each other sometimes, don't they? Time goes by so quickly, doesn't it? The year is already this much over already, and last year still seems like yesterday, doesn't it?

When I am gathered again, it takes some time, but when I am gathered again, I sit and read:

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



2/Nov. Dia de los muertos

*They're always there whether we see them or not.

1. CONCEIVING
2. GATHERING
3. CHANNELING
4. CONSULTING
5. SWEEPING
6. TYING

before these there is UNTYING

0.

3. Channeling happens all through this
It's always present, the Dead moving from background to foreground & everything in between – it's all a question of focus. *

It could also be said that the movement from Meditation Trance to Performance is not a clear line – but a Tango between

3 & 4.

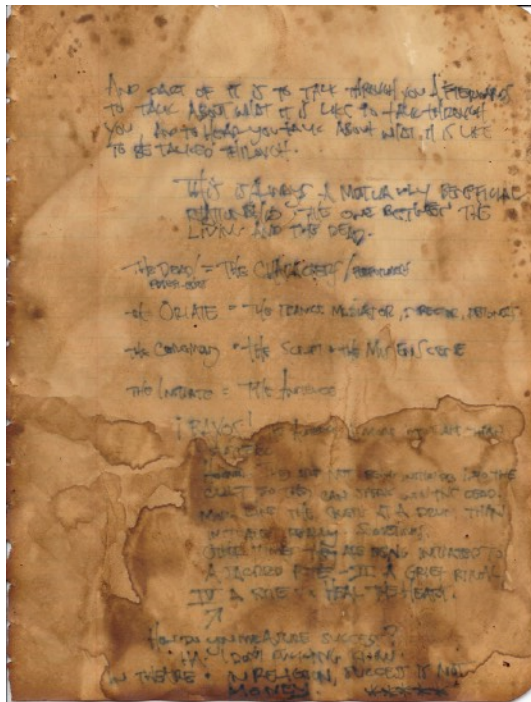
Untying:

time or Living &
space Dead

Because part of the reason the Dead come is
to speak through you to tell the story of
Time and Space, to you and to an audience,

Of course. Of course this would be SPILLED out on the Day of the Dead. The one time when we can be public about the Dead. The light during this time of year, there is something about the thin veil between worlds being thinnest during this time of year. During this time of year I feel like I am waking from a dream, but not quite, not quite out of the dream, I wake up from one dream and fall into another.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



And part of it is to talk through you afterwards to talk about what it is like to talk through you, and to hear you talk about what it is like to be talked through.

This is always a mutually beneficial relationship. The one between the Living and the Dead.

The Dead/ = The Characters/Performers
Priest_esses

The Oriate = The Trance Mediator, Director, Designers

The Ceremony= The Script & the Mis en scene

The Initiate = The Audience

¡RAYOS! XXXXX

XXXXX

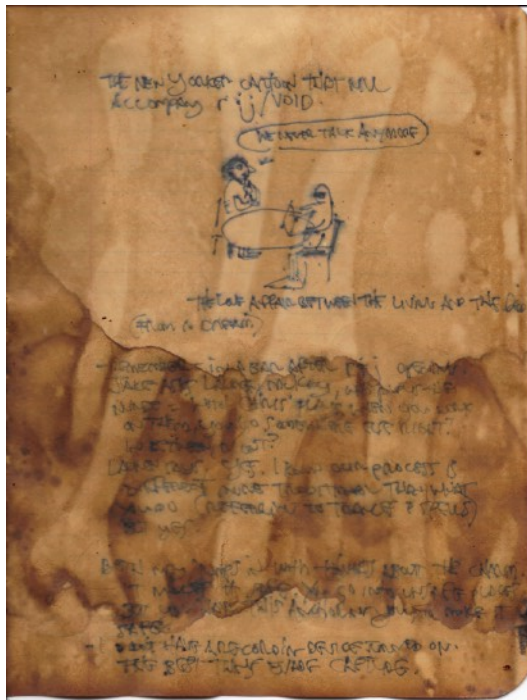
XXXXX

It is plain as water drawn first thing in the morning, plain as a feast for Obatala (no salt), this notebook is a chronicle, a book of spells, a guide for the sorcerer.

It is challenging to have this document, at this time. When I live, there are old conflicts that have not been resolved, and sometimes this leads to a terrible division in ceremonial practices, where considerations of race and skin color and language take precedence over understanding and wisdom and compassion. I suppose that all traditions go through cycles like this, but this one is particularly vicious because of the vicious history that saw its birth. So, it is always tenuous to speak of these things in any public dimension, because the divisions are greater outside of ceremonial contexts. But we have to talk. It does not matter if we say stupid things, even, so long as we keep talking.

There are many worlds and we do not all live in every single one of them, but, there are moments when we find that we cross paths in multiple ways, there are some places where we see the traces of the other Ancestors who have been there and asked the same questions we are asking. It is like train tracks, sometimes we are at places where so many tracks cross, we have to assume that we are at a station. The way we each talk about these tracks, that is methodology.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



The New Yorker cartoon that will accompany r&j/VOID.

We never talk anymore.

The love affair between the Living and the Dead.
(From a dream)

XXXXXX

XXXXXX

XXXXXX

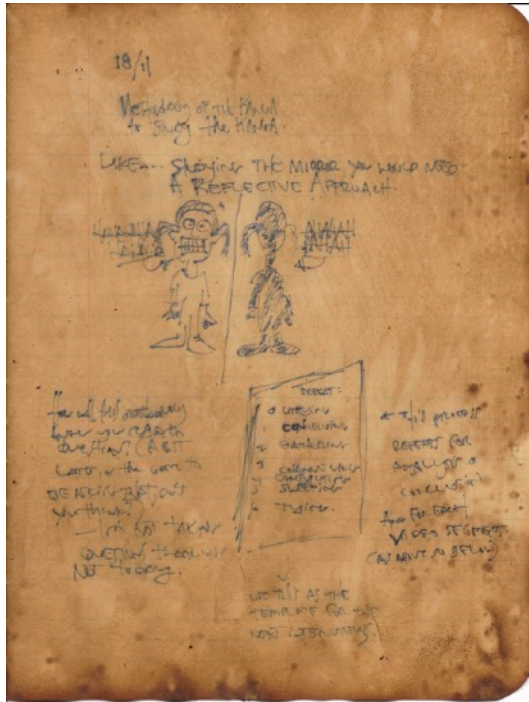
—I didn't have a recording device turned on.

The best things evade capture.

Now he is drawing cartoons for an imaginary audience, which is worrisome, and here it is funny, it makes me laugh, haha, haha. 'We never talk any more'. That's so true!

'The best things evade capture.' This is true. We can see the Dead, but we can't touch them, and that is why we grieve.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



Methodology of the Kanga
to study the Kanga.

Like — studying the mirror, you would need
a reflective approach.

Repeat:

How will this methodology 0 Untying This process
answer your research 1 Conceiving repeats for
question? (a bit 2 Gathering analysis &
late in the game to 3 Channeling conclusion
be asking that, don't 4 Consulting And for each
you think?) 5 Sweeping video segment.
—I'm not taking 6. Tying (As above so below)
questions thank you.

Not today.

Use this as the
template for the
XXXXXXXXXX

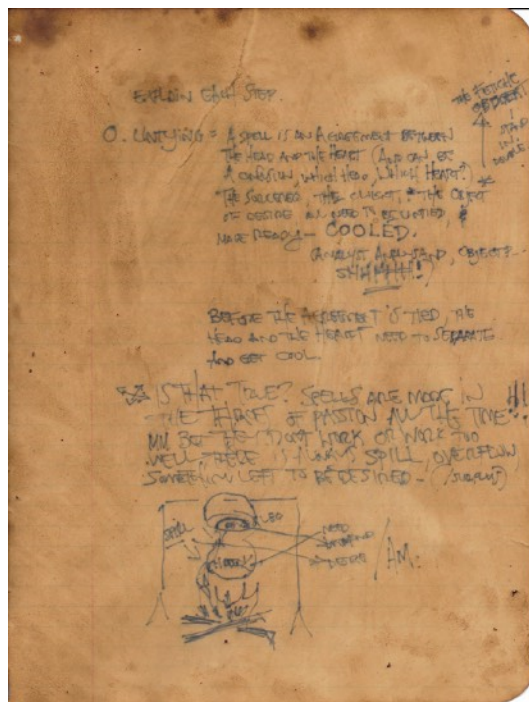
Now my heart starts to quicken, there are two things about this page. First, the idea that you must be under the influence of the thing you are studying, which is contrary to what I have read about scientific things, but this makes sense to me if we are talking about magic things. This might be the biggest difference between the worlds of scientists and sorcerers. Scientists think they are outside, and sorcerers think they are inside. Scientists have to be outside in order to see it and think about it, and sorcerers have to be inside of it in order to understand it. But they are both wrong, we are all inside the thing and outside the thing, if we are engaged with the thing at all.

I think some sorcerers and scientists know this.

The second thing. The stages of the method within the methodology are laid out here for the first time.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook

Before I have a chance to blink or think, it begins, the work, the work suddenly begins, with the stage before stage one:



Explain Each Step

The Fetiche

Obdger

0. UNTYING: A Spell is an Agreement between Stand the Head and the Heart (And can be In. A Confusion, Which Head, Which Heart?) Double. The Sorcerer, the Client, & the Object * of Desire, all need to be untied, & made Ready - C O O L E D . (Analyst, Analysand, Objet P— SHHHHHH!

Before the Agreement is Tied, the Head and the Heart need to separate. And get cool.

IS THAT TRUE? SPELLS ARE MADE IN THE THROES OF PASSION ALL THE TIME!!! MM BUT THEY DON'T WORK OR WORK TOO WELL, THERE IS ALWAYS SPILL, OVERFLOW, SOMETHING LEFT TO BE DESIRED - (/Surplus)

Revealed

Spill

Need

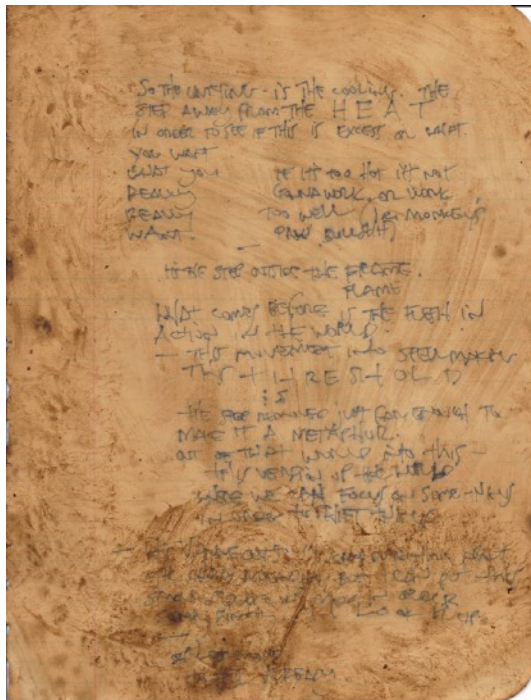
Demand /HM.

Hidden

Desire

This points out an elementary binary, in Yoruba thought, that between the hidden and the revealed, and even though I do not ordinarily track citations myself, this is not an ordinary time, so, the Hidden and the Revealed (Buckley, 1985: 53) and (Lacan: 1999, 17).

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



So the Untying – is the Cooling – the
step away from the H E A T
in order to see if this is excess or what
you want

what you really want. if it's too hot it's not
gonna work, or work
too well (i.e. monkey's
paw bullshit.)

It's the step outside the frame
flame

What comes before is the Flesh in
Action in the World.

— That Movement into Spellmaking
This T H R E S H O L D

is
the step removed just far enough

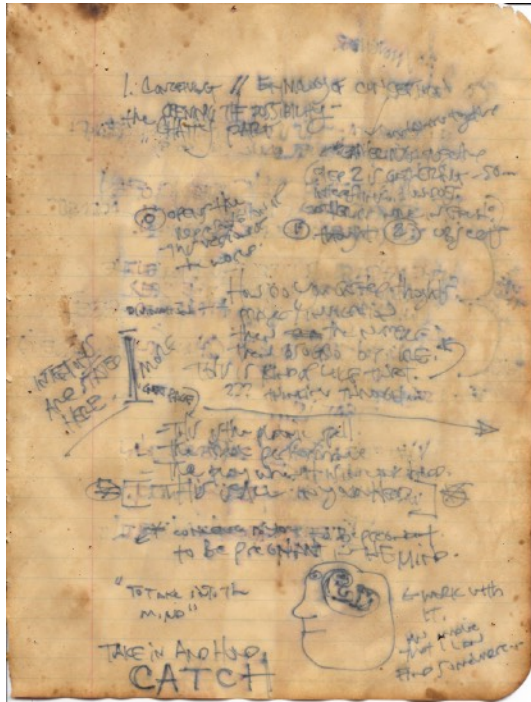
Make it a Metaphor.
Out of that world into this —

this version of the world
where we can focus on some things
in order to shift things

XXXXXX

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook

Next is stage one, conception:



1. Conceiving//Etymology of Conception

Opening the possibility –

the Chatty Part or taking together

*Gathering Together

(Stage 2 is Gathering – so...

interesting...how does

0 opens the representation of this version of the world

gathering work in each?)

(1) Thought (2) Objects

How do you gather thoughts?

proper invocation

then the number

then Osogbo or Ire.

This is kind of like that.

???thinking through...

Divination—

Intentions

Are Stated More

Here.

–This is the platonic spell.

–The ideal performance.

–The play when it is in your head.

[This is all in your head.]

*

*

*

conceive also – to be pregnant

to be Pregnant in the Mind

"to take into the mind."

work with

it.

an image

that I can

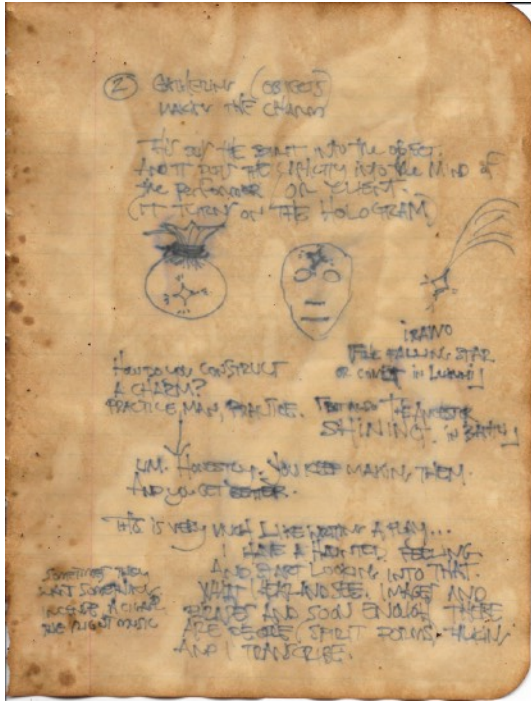
find somewhere...

Take In And Hold

CATCH

I feel slightly like I am losing my grip on things, or am wondering if this sorcerer may have lost touch. There is always that danger that the metaphor will slip and start doing things that it ought not to do. The part of me that is cautious is asleep however and the part of me that will wander into any cave if invited, even if the cave will likely cave in, is wide awake so I go forward.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



(2) Gathering (Objects)
Making the Charm

This puts the Spirit into the Object
And it puts the Capacity into the Mind of
the Performer/or Client
(It Turns on the Hologram)

irawo

- the falling star

How do you Construct or comet in Lukumí-
A Charm?

Practice, Man, Practice. –but also The Ancestor
SHINING. in Bantu–
Um. Honestly. You keep making them.
And you get better.

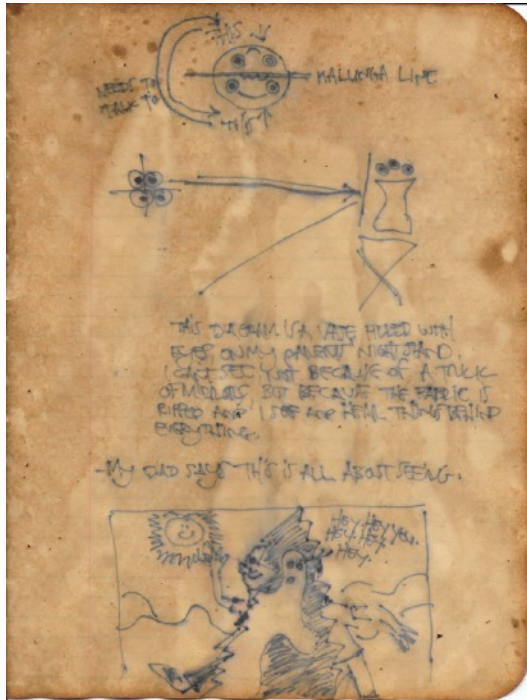
This is very much like writing a play...

sometimes they
want something
incense a cigar
the right music

I have a haunted feeling
and start looking into that.
What I hear and see. Images and
phrases and soon enough there
are people (spirit forms) talking
and I transcribe.

This is about what gathering does to consciousness when I was hoping for a more comprehensive list of ingredients for a charm. Eye of newt and blood of a dragon, that kind of thing. Or for a performer, the ingredients would be the posture, the inner image, any of the objects that might already be in their pockets...

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



NEEDS TO
TALK TO

THIS
KALUNGA LINE

THIS

This diagram is a vase filled with eyes on my parents' night stand. I can't see, not because of a trick of mirrors, but because the fabric is ripped and I see and hear things

behind

everything.

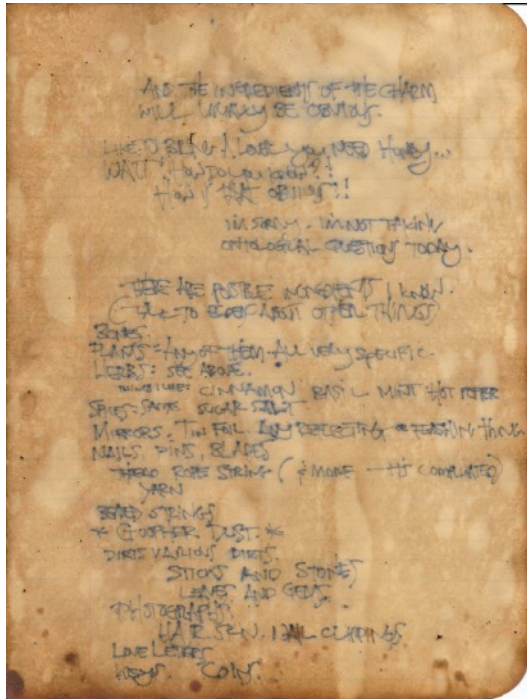
—My dad says this is all about seeing.

Hey. Hey you.

Hey. Hey.

Hey.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



And the ingredients of the charm
will usually be obvious.

Like to bring a lover you need honey...

Wait! How do you know?!

How is that obvious?!

I'm sorry. I'm not taking
ontological questions today.

These are possible ingredients I know

(Talk to elders about other things)

Bones.

Plants: Any of them. All very specific.

Herbs: See above.

things i like: cinnamon basic mint hot pepper

Spices: same sugar salt

Mirrors: Tin foil. Any reflecting or flashing thing.

Nails, Pins, Blades

Thread rope string (& more —it's complicated)

yarn

Beaded strings.

Goopher dust

Dirts various dirts

Sticks and Stones

Leaves and Gems

Photographs.

Hair. Skin. Nail clippings.

Love letters.

Keys. Coins.

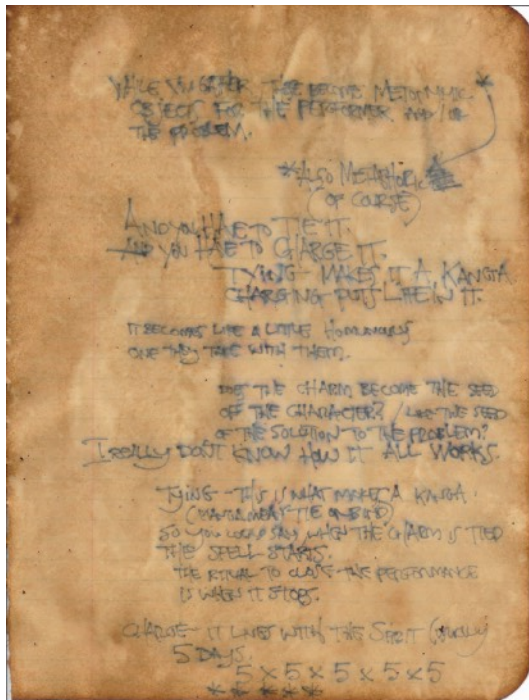
Uh-huh. Here is the list.

Ingredients for a charm.

Uh-huh.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook

And this is how a charm works then:



While you gather, these become Metonymic*
Objects for the Performer and/or
the Problem.

*Also Metaphoric
(Of Course)

And you have to tie it.

And you have to charge it.

Tying Makes it a Kanga
Charging Puts Life in it.

It becomes like a little Homunculus.

One they take with them.

Does the charm become the seed
of the character? / Like the seed
of the solution to the problem?

I really don't know how it all works.

Tying – This is what makes a Kanga.

(Kanga means Tie or Bind)

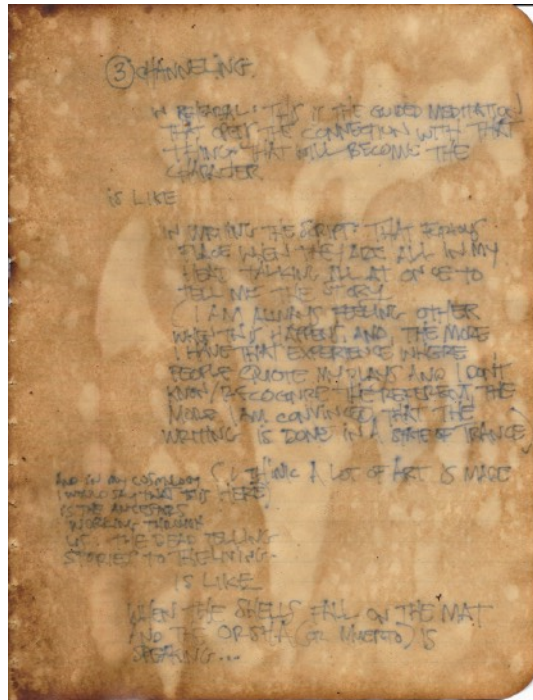
So you could say when the Charm is Tied
the Spell Starts.

The ritual to close the performance
is when it stops.

Charge – It lives with the Spirit (usually
5 Days)

5 X 5 X 5 X 5 X 5

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



(3) CHANNELING

In Rehearsal: This is the Guided Meditation that Opens the Connection with That Thing that will become the Character.

is like

In Writing the Script: That Furious

Place when they are all in my Head talking all at once to Tell me the Story.

(I am always feeling Other when this happens, and, the more I have that experience where People Quote my plays and I don't know/recognize the referent, the more I am convinced that the writing is done in a state of Trance)

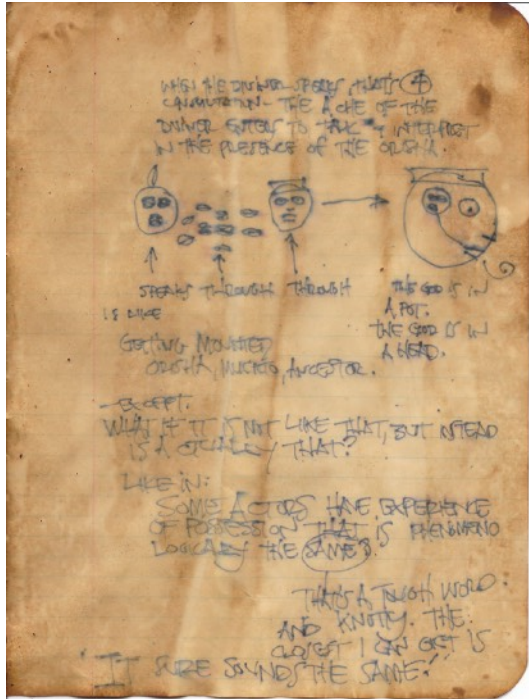
And in my cosmology
I would say that this
is the Ancestors
working through
us. The Dead telling
stories to the Living.

is like

When the Shells Fall on the Mat
and the Orisha (or Muerto) is
Speaking...

(I think a lot of art is made
Here)

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



When the Diviner speaks, that's (4) Consultation – the Aché of the Diviner enters to talk & interpret in the presence of the Orisha.

Speaks	Through	Through	The God is in
			a Pot.
is like			The God is in
Getting Mounted			a Head.
	Orisha, Muerto, Ancestor.		
—Except.			
What if it is not actually like that, but instead is actually that?			
Like in:			
	Some actors have experience		
	of possession that is phenomeno		
	logically the same?		

That's a tough word.
And knotty. The
closest I can get is

'IT SURE SOUNDS THE SAME!'

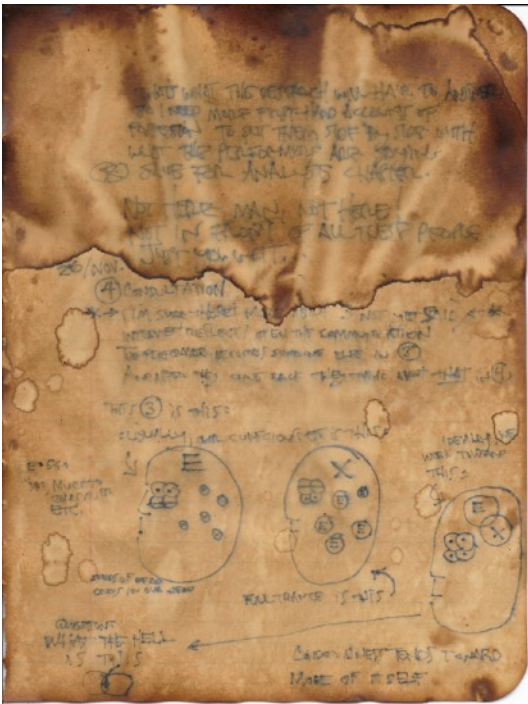
This is where it gets tangled. Any knot should tangle.

I shake my head and put cold water on my neck. I go outside and play with the dog, playing catch with a magic 8 ball. The answer to every question is, 'BETTER NOT TELL YOU NOW.'

I am ruminating on what I have read. What is hidden still, this is what is meant by consultation. In the ritual of divination, the consultation is the interpretation into human terms of what the Orisha is saying. This could be said to be that space where the old teachings, which are really principles of the physical universe, are transformed. The diviner transcribes the words that are transcribed from principles that have been put into the mouths of anthropomorphic versions of the energy of the universe. We are built to understand things through metaphor, it is in our head before we are born. Whenever we speak, we are transcribing something, or translating it, and the translation is always never quite right.

I go back inside. This dog is exhausted.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



XXXXX

XXXXX

(4) CONSULTATION

-> (I'm sure there's more XXXXX 3 not yet XXXX-
Interview Reflect / Open the Communication
The Performer becomes someone else in (3)
And after they come back, they talk about that in

(4)

This (3) is this:

:Usually, our consciousness is this:

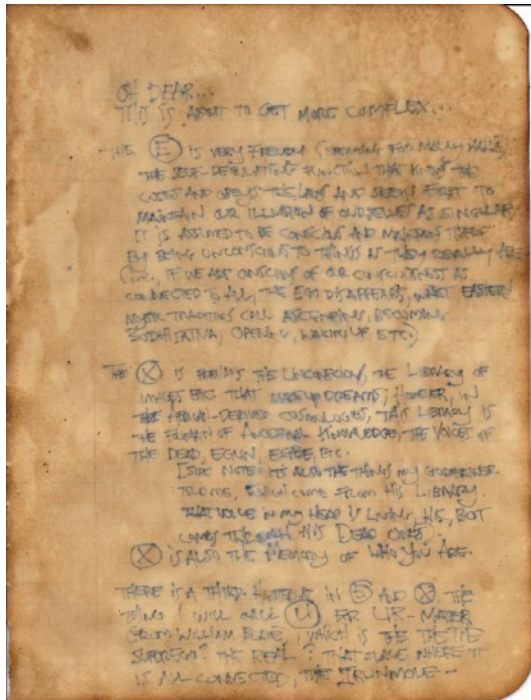
E=EGO	E	Ideally, we
X=MUERTO	X	work toward
CHARACTER	E	this:
ETC.	X	
	seeds of Dead	
	ones in our head	full trance is

this

QUESTION:
WHAT THE HELL
IS THIS

CONSCIOUSNESS TENDS TOWARD
MORE OF ITSELF

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



Oh Dear...

This is about to get more complex...

The (E) is very Freudy (speaking formally haha)

The self-regulating function that knows the codes and obeys the laws and seeks first to maintain our illusion of ourselves as singular.

It is assumed to be conscious and maintains itself by being unconscious to things as they really are.

(i.e., if we are conscious of our consciousness as connected to all, the ego disappears, what Eastern Mystic Traditions call Ascending, Becoming Bodhisattva, Opening, Waking Up, Etc.)

The (X) is perhaps the unconscious, the library of images, etc. that make up dreams; however, in the Africa-derived cosmologies, this library is the Fountain of Ancestral Knowledge, the Voices of the Dead, Egun, Egbe, Etc.

(Side note: It's also the things my Godfather

told me, which come from his Library.

That voice in my head is Living, his, but comes through his Dead Ones).

(X) is also the Memory of Who You Are.

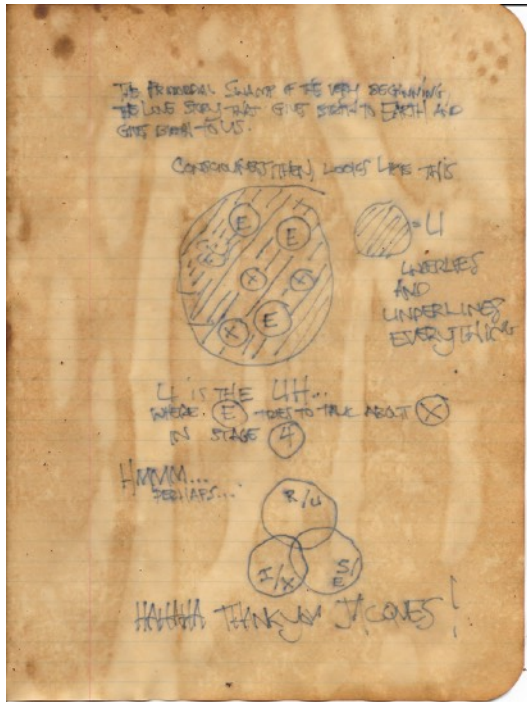
There is a third. Hinted at in (E) and (X), the thing I will call (U) for Ur-Matter

(from William Blake), which is the the the Superego? The Real? That place where it is all connected, the Irunmole –

Aha, this is also a theory of how consciousness works.

Do people still read William Blake? I had a teacher once told me that people do not read him any more, but she told me this while we were reading him. I find no citation for this Ur Matter in Blake, and perhaps this reference will remain a mystery. Ur-matter is primordial matter, sure, like the *Irunmole*'s world, but in relation to William Blake? Who knows. It may be from a book, or it may be from a communication more recently, and I know that's unfortunate for scholarly matters. When we hear things from the Dead, it is hard to document. Because it is not rigorous. Or because it is slightly crazy, if I say, 'William Blake told me...' then I would forgive you if you replied, 'Hahaha, you did not.'

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



The Primordial Swamp of the Very Beginning.
The Love Story that gives birth to Earth and
gives birth to Us.

Consciousness, then, looks like this

=U
Underlies
And
Underlines
Everything

U is the UH...

Where (E) tries to talk about (X)
in stage (4)

HMMM...

PERHAPS...

R/U

I/X

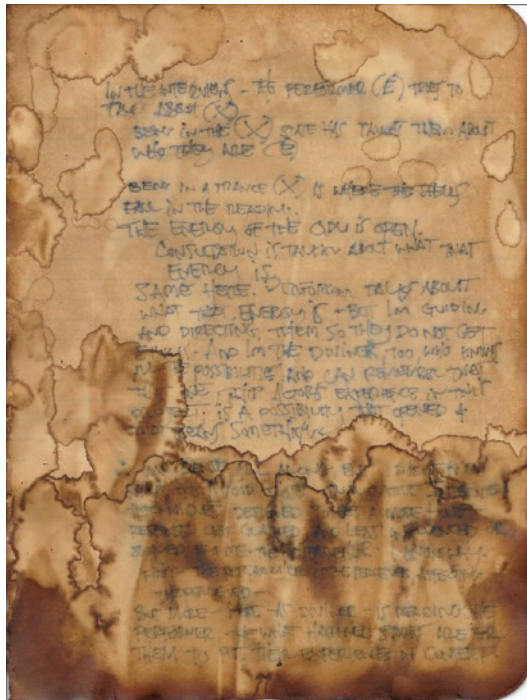
S/E

HAHAHA THANK YOU JACQUES!

Likewise this I do not understand the referent to Jacques here not at all (playing dumb).

But this reminds me, this complicated mess of symbols, reminds me of something my Padrino told me. Leave it to the elders to find ways of saying it more simply. He said he wanted to tell me how to go into a trance, how to channel the Dead. He said, Here's how to do it. Close your eyes, relax, imagine yourself on a road, you're in a car on a road, kind of like the road between Phoenix and Tucson, there's just you, and long stretches in front of you. Call on the one you want to channel. When you feel them close, you kind of just move aside, almost like you're in a sidecar, and they're driving. Let them drive. And just let whatever they say come out, don't judge it, just let it happen. (Johnson, 15 May 2015)

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



In the interviews – The Performer (E) tries to talk about (X)

Being in the (X) state has taught them about who they are (E)

Being in a trance (X) is where the shells fall in the reading.

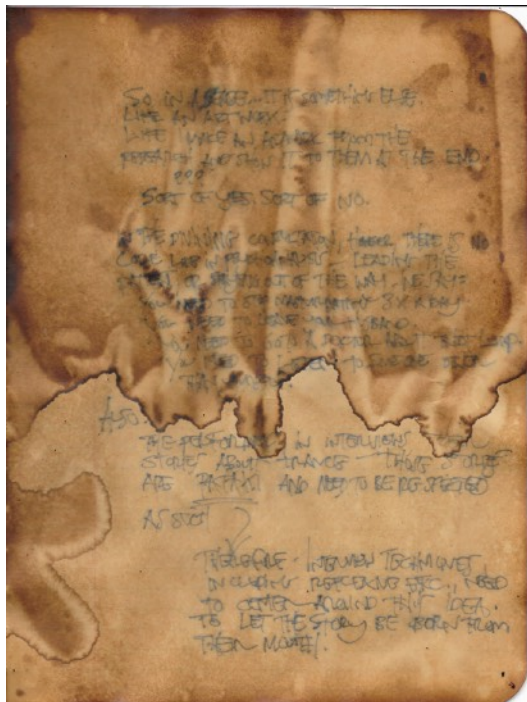
The energy of the ODU is open.

Consultation is talking about what that Energy is.

Same here. Performer talks about what that Energy is – but I'm guiding and directing them so they do not get XXXXX. And I'm the Diviner, too, who knows XXXXX possibilities, and can remember that XXXXXne, this actor's experience in this XXXXXct, is a possibility that opened & XXXXeans something.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

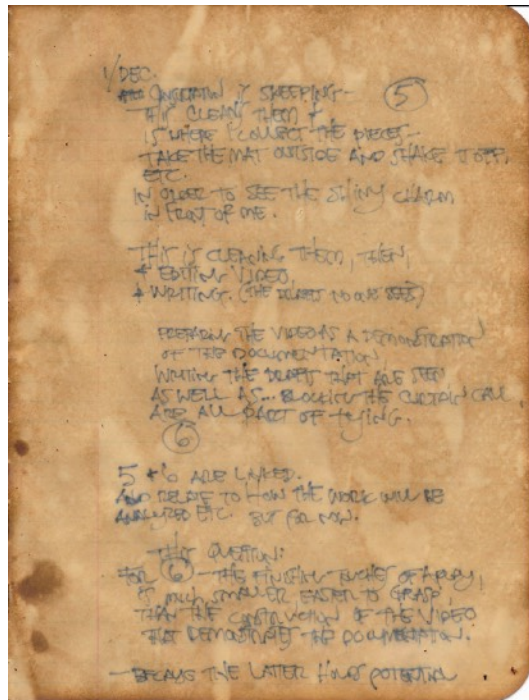
Also...

The performXXX, in interviews, XXXX stories about trance — those stories are PATAKI and need to be respected as such

Therefore. Interview techniques, including reflexive, etc., need to center around this idea.

To let the story be born from their mouth.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



After Consultation is Sweeping – (5)

This cleans them &

is where I collect the pieces –
take mat outside and shake it off,
etc.

in order to see the shiny charm
in front of me.

This is cleaning them, then,
& editing video.

& writing. (the draft no one sees)

Preparing the video as a demonstration
of the documentation,
writing the drafts that are seen,
as well as...blocking the curtain call,
are all part of tying.

(6)

5&6 are linked.

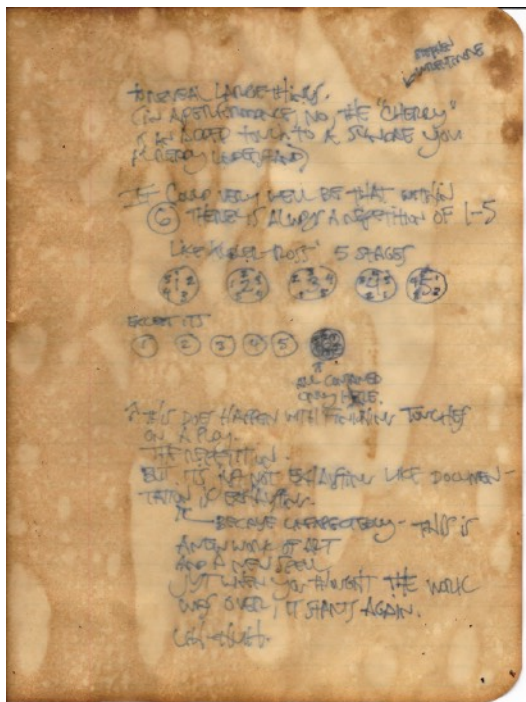
And relate to how the work will be
analyzed, etc. But for now.

This question:

For (6) – the finishing touches of a play,
is much smaller, easier to grasp,
than the construction of the video
that demonstrates the documentation.

—because the latter holds potential

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



to reveal large things.
(in a performance, no, the "cherry"
is an added touch to a sundae you
already understand)

Stephen
Wrentmore

It could very well be that within
(6) there is always a repetition of 1-5
Like Kubler-Ross' 5 Stages
Except it's
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

all contained
only here

This does happen with finishing touches
on a play.
The repetition.
But. It's just not exhausting like documen-
tation is exhausting.

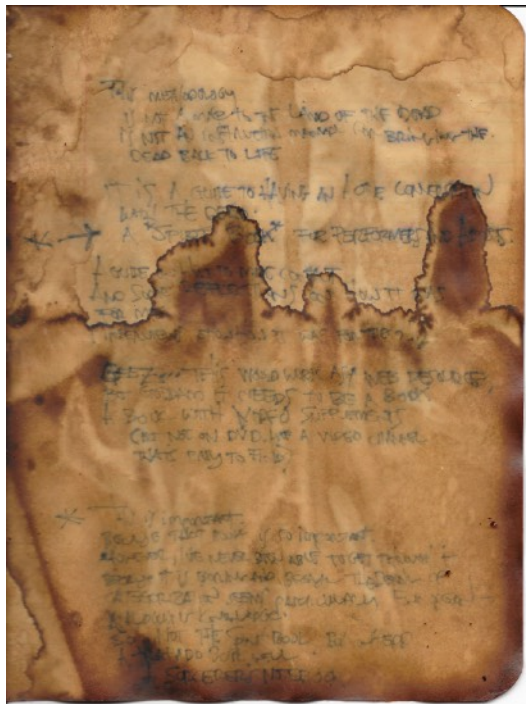
Because unexpectedly – this is
a new work of art

and a new spell,
just when you thought the work
was over, it starts again.
uh-huh.

Here. The notebook. It disintegrating. To my touch.

Sweeping and tying, these words are escaping me, I cannot contain them, and I cannot try to capture them. I suspect this may be because they are not instructions meant for me, but for another version of me, that is, I will have to wait until I am someone else. At the risk of running up against my own decomposition.

Appendix D: The Sorcerer's Notebook



This methodology
is not a map to the Land of the Dead
is not an instruction manual for bringing the
Dead back to Life

It is a guide to having an Active Conversation
with the Dead.

*—>A *Spirit Book* for Performers and Artists.

XXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Time does not move forward as planned, it comes to stand very still. I see myself in this, more than a reflection, but rather a projection, into a present, influenced by a version of the future or the past, I am not sure. This has been written by me, a version of me, from a past I have not yet lived, or from a future that will never stand behind me, this is a version of me talking to myself. It is not a philosophical treatise, but a blueprint for a question that I am always just on the verge of asking.

When I cross between worlds, I am a sorcerer or a dog, or both at once, and when I am asking the world of the Dead to talk to the world of the Living, or when I am waiting for art to speak to ritual, or when I am waiting for dead elders who spoke one language to talk to dead elders in another part of the world, speaking another language, the same thing happens, I hear music, I hear the music that is like the roar of the ocean, it is always there already, it is already in my ears already, I just forgot how to tune in to the sounds, I forgot how to listen, and when I am listening I remember. There are questions. They have three questions. They always ask the same three questions, they say they want me to consider:

What are we?

How do we know what we are?

Why aren't we talking more often?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

I. How I Lost Your Mother in the Underworld MOTSI

a. Introduction

We start in ritual.

Something that leads into the trance the dance. We each have a white sheet, a mirror, a candle.

There's a ritual for everything, a beginning and an ending for everything, even though we can never really pinpoint the beginning of anything, and it seems like every ending never really ends like an ending should end. On the same note, we're always in the middle of a ritual that we don't quite understand. However. I'm going to clarify things, so that you feel like you know exactly where you are, even though I honestly don't know myself. Don't take it personally. Over here, this is the scene where scenes take place, where you will see enactments of scenes, a place to see scenes. And over here is a wall with a place where there is video, and you'll see yourselves up here sometimes. And everywhere else is where everything that's not a scene and not a video takes place, the place where everything spills over, the place where excess spill over, this everywhere else is the excess. You really don't have to pay all that much attention, just don't talk during this.

The video starts. WORDS ON SCREEN:

This is like being on TV.

Everything that happens has happened or will happen on TV. Those things that you are still thinking about, they happened on TV, and they are happening on TV now, and they're going to keep happening on TV, and they're also going to keep happening to you.

1. O&E in paradise.

(Scene: Living room. MARSHALL AND LILY are getting ready for a superduper movie party night with their friends.)

MARSHALL

Popcorn?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

Check.

LILY

Beer?

MARSHALL

Check.

LILY

Otter pops?

MARSHALL

Si, señor.

LILY

Awesome.

MARSHALL

It is awesome, isn't it? It's really awesome.

LILY

It's really, really awesome.

MARSHALL

That's so awesome.

LILY

It is.

MARSHALL

Just awesome.

LILY

(They almost make out, but MARSHALL, oh, he pulls back, there is something not right with MARSHALL, not right at all, no.)

LILY

What's wrong, baby cakes, what's got into my marshmallow?

MARSHALL

Lily, I keep having dreams, dreams where you're a witch, and you've trapped my soul inside a bottle and you keep me there against my will, and you force me to work a job for a corporate america that I don't believe in, and we have way too many kids to cover up our fear of death.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

LILY

Now that's just crazy talk, give me one of your hairs.

(He plucks a hair.)

See? If I wanted to possess you, I would wrap this in a cloth and, tie it with a thread of your pillowcase and bury it in an abandoned graveyard for three days. But I don't do witchy things, baby cake honey blossom.

MARSHALL

Gosh, Lily, that sure takes a load off. I was worried that you put a spell on me because I'm so naive.

LILY

No one thinks you're naive.

MARSHALL

Aw, honey. I believe you, I really do.

(She hides the hair in her shirt, oh, this is so mysterious.)

(And the guests arrive.)

BARNEY

Thanks for inviting me over to your new house, Mom and Dad, I mean god and policeman, I mean Marshall and Lily.

MARSHALL

Hi, Barney! You're awesome!

BARNEY

It's so great to be here, in your new house, outside the city, where we can have a movie night, in a location that's just a little out of the ordinary for us, but not hard at all to imagine that these stools are a couch, and so on and so forth.

ROBIN (enters)

Hi, my awesome buds! I just had a very promiscuous week to cover over my insecurities about my career, so this is a nice break! Good thing I'm already a little drunk, can I have a whiskey?

MARSHALL

Hi, Robin, you're awesome.

TED (enters)

My dear friends, I met...the one. It was magic for at least an hour, maybe 90 whole minutes, but then she had to move to Colorado to live with her boyfriend so they could her old clothes online. And it made me

Appendix E: The Play Texts

realize, love is so short, and life is short, and that's why Robin and I decided to get back together.

ROBIN

We did not.

TED

Oh, but we will.

ROBIN

No we won't.

LILY

Let's start the movie, guys!!

(The video starts.)

Orpheus and Eurydice are wed, and happy for a short time.

BARNEY

I hate reading when I'm watching a movie, it's stupid.

She is bitten by a viper and dies.

Orpheus petitions to the gods to go to the Underworld and bring her back.

They grant his wish, and he vows to bring back Demeter's daughter.

ROBIN

Who's that?

LILY

Eurydice.

ROBIN

Why don't they just say that?

In the Underworld, he finds her, and she follows him, but he is not to look back.

But he looks back.

She says, "Farewell."

He goes on. Not for that long.

BARNEY

They told us the whole story already, who watches things when they know the story already? I mean, what are we, French Canadian?

ROBIN

Hey.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

Falling in love is a spell.

Dying is a spell.

Entering the Underworld is a spell.

Following and being followed by a lover you can't look in the eyes, is a spell.

When Orpheus met Eurydice, he knew that he would lose Eurydice, but he met her anyway, and fell in love with her anyway, and that's why their first kiss was the first sad song he ever wrote.

And the first time they kissed, it was in the meadow, because it's always in the meadow, and the grass that they used for a pillow was the same grass that would one day cover her grave, and that's the second sad song he wrote.

TED

Oh, my god! This is the story of my life! The first time we kissed was in a field, she set down her date shake and I knew it was time to kiss her, and then I did, and I didn't know if she loved me, but then she took off her pants and I knew. Oh, I knew.

ROBIN

Maybe she was just hot.

TED

Taking off your pants is a sign!

ROBIN

It's not always a sign.

LILY

It's a sign of somethin-somethin, I'll tell you that!

MARSHALL

I love you guys, you're so awesome!

LILY

Marshall smoked all our pot before you came here.

MARSHALL

It's the best way to get through a long-term, straight, committed relationship.

PSYCH (enters)

Hello, don't mind me.

MARSHALL

You're awesome! Who are you.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

PSYCH

A psychiatrist. Don't mind me, I'm friends with the guy who came in.

Eurydice was not stupid. She knew full well that when she was born, she was born for the grave.

Eurydice also wrote songs, she keeps them in a notebook, and she writes the story of their love as it unfolds, and she writes it simply, because she knows how it will end, and she knows that she'll have nothing left but the notebook, and the nuances can't be in the words, because she'll want to remember it differently every time she reads it, so all of the flourishes are in the drawings in the margins. Everything that's important to her takes place in the margins, in a secret code that only she knows how to read.

I.

i: Have you ever lost somebody?

u: Hasn't everyone?

I know this is not what you want, it's not what you expect, but it's what happened to me, it's what keeps happening to me.

Scene: In the grass.

E: I think we're in heaven.

O: Yes.

(Long pause.)

O: Hey, do you remember that guy, that guy we saw in the cave, three days ago?

E: The Soothsayer?

O: Yeah.

E: I remember him.

O: Yeah. Do you, do you know him?

E: Oh, wow.

O: No, it's not that, it's just, there was this look between you, and it looked to me like you knew each other from before.

E: Oh, wow.

O: I'm not jealous.

What most people forget, that moment, that time, when you're in love, it's never as sweet in the moment as it is when you remember it. Anyone who's in love is filled with doubt and is always second-guessing themselves, because love makes us all stupid, and we're all pretty well aware, even at the time, that we're doing stupid things and forgetting to do all kinds of things that we know we should be doing, and nothing really works very well. You think about that person all the time, and you think of

Appendix E: The Play Texts

things you'll say to make that person want you in the same way that you want them, but no one really ever knows anybody anyway, and no one wants in the same way, and if we knew that at the outset then we would leave it for someone else, so they could be disappointed in our place.

II.

i: Have you ever lost somebody?

u: No. I never lose anybody. Sometimes I send them away, but I never lose them. I never get attached like that.

2. E's Death.

III.

i: Have you ever lost somebody?

u: How did you know?

i: It's just a guess.

u: Did you hear anything?

i: What do you mean? About you?

u: Yes.

i: I haven't heard anything about you. Why would I hear anything about you?

u: Because people talk about me all the time. I'm the one that lost somebody very, very important.

i: You're the one?

u: Yes.

i: I'm pretty sure you're not the only one that's lost somebody.

u: If I told you my story, you'd know that I was the real one, the real one who lost everything.

LILY

Now I'm confused.

BARNEY

Let's skip to the special features.

(On screen, the words:
Seeing Voices with Lynn.)

I: Monsters of the Sea opens in Phoenix in June of this year. This has a lot of talk already, and we wanted to add to that. We hoped to be the first, but by now, we're lucky to be the third major publication to cover it.

CD: I believe you're actually the 4th.

I: No.

CD: Yes, I'm sorry.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(There is a pause. It's a bit of a shock. No one likes to be the 4th in anything.)

I: Well, regardless, we'll try to be the most thorough.

CD: Good luck, it's sometimes hard to get information out of me in a, you know, straight line.

(They laugh and they laugh.)

I: All right, then, Mr. Danowski. Tell us what you might tell us, then, about this 'Monsters of the Sea.'

CD: All right.

I: It sounds epic.

CD: Oh, it is.

I: Good.

CD: Please don't be too interrupty. Now. In June, people, selected audiences, really, private audiences of about ten or twelve at a time, will be invited into my home to watch the first of this new series of works.

I: Why so small?

CD: I'm sorry? (CD gets uncomfortable, because he thinks they're talking about something that they're not talking about.)

I: Why are the audiences so small for this?

CD: Oh, they can be any size. We don't discriminate based on height.

I: Oh, sorry, I was referring to the number.

CD: Ah. Aha, oh, yes, that. Well, it's intimate. It's a ritual, and there's a very good chance that the spectators will be pulled into the ritual.

I: Like in the olden days.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

CD: If you like, yes, it's a return to the ritual forms of theater.

I: Wait, now I notice that you pronounce theater with the 'er' ending rather than the 're.'

CD: You have an extraordinary ear.

I: You really are something of a flirt.

CD: I'm really not, I'm terribly innocent, it just happens, we get in a room, and things start to spark up, it's not my intention, I'm sorry if this is inappropriate.

I: It's quite lovely, really, I can tell you work out. Tell us about that.

CD: I've been working with a trainer, and it's really quite something, the Hollywood boys haven't gotten a hold of it yet, but it's all with refrigerators. First, I run seven miles with a portable refrigerator on my back, as a warm up. Then I do these jumps, where I walk up to a full size refrigerator, and jump up on it, and then back down, and so on and so forth, about 50 times, and then I lift the refrigerator for the free weights portion, then go back to the jumping, and I do a number of combinations, and then I swim through a moat filled with alligators, and then I hit the shower. It takes about five hours, but it really gets the heart going.

I: I can't even concentrate, please go back to the theater with an 'er.'

CD: Oh, that, that's just the Irish spelling, to show that we're not doing traditional English theatre at all, and really, that's not even...(He can't find his words, and he's thinking hard, remembering lost loves, thinking about wolves, being gloomy, but just for a moment. He brightens.) This is really the new form that I've been working toward for the past three years. Every art form evolves, you know, the first Nadaists of the 1930's brought that home.

I: Where was this?

CD: In Buenos Aires, of course.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

I: You should teach.

CD: Oh, I'm sure it wouldn't go well. There would be lots of students complaining that it was too hard to follow, and that there were too many music videos, and half the work is in Spanish.

(And they laugh and they laugh and they laugh so much that they have to take a break.)

(To be continued. This segues into, not them watching film but in the bar.)

(The bar.)

BARNEY

I've got twins in handcuffs, and one of them has your name all over her. Of course, I can't tell which one, they're identical!

TED

Thank you, Barney, but I think I won't be needing any twins any more, if you get my drift.

BARNEY

My penis is backwards. I mean broken. I mean your penis is broken.

TED

Hahaha, no, I'd say not quite broken, but rather smitten. I had a dream, another dolphin dream, about Robin, and I've decided to ask her to marry me.

BARNEY

Congratulations.

ROBIN (enters, with the PSYCH)

What did I miss.

BARNEY

I was just congratulating Ted, on being a damn fool!

(He smacks his head.)

You can't marry Robin, Ted, haven't you been paying attention? She's the aunt.

ROBIN

Oh, Ted, what the fuck.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

TED

I'm building up to it. We haven't built up to it yet, but we're building up to it.

BARNEY

It's just a dream, Ted, a carefree dolphin dream, the kind all young men have.

PSYCH

If you dream of dolphins it means you're crazy. I mean complicated.

TED

It is a dream, but this dream is heaven. There's dolphins and there's lots of seminars about terribly interesting topics--

ROBIN

--I hate seminars, and dolphins. They rape.

TED

Some of the seminars are optional. Entirely optional!

LILY (enters)

Guys, I need your help. Marshall has been carried off by bigfoot, and I don't think he's coming back.

MARSHALL (off)

Oh my god, bigfoot, I love you, you're so awesome!

LILY

Oh, that's hard to hear.

TED

Oh, that reminds me. I had the best day. I think I met the one.

LILY

Where'd you meet the lucky girl?

PSYCH

I think Ted needs a dog.

TED

What place on earth is somewhere between heaven and hell?

BARNEY

My underwear.

LILY

I don't get it.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

PSYCH

Ted needs a dog, that way he wouldn't keep trying to replace you, even when you're right here.

ROBIN

Ted, I'm confused. I thought you were going to try to marry me again. I'd say no. But maybe not. Maybe not, Ted, did you ever think about that?

PSYCH

Ignore her.

(ROBIN glares at PSYCH.)

This is for your own good.

TED

This was in a parking lot.

BARNEY

A parking lot? Wait, hold on.

(Takes a sip, does a spit take.)

A parking lot?

TED

Yes.

LILY

That's wonderful news, although it's hard not to be thinking about Marshall.

MARSHALL (off)

I'm fine, honey! Bigfoot is awesome!

ROBIN

You should ask me again, Ted. I'd probably say no, but maybe not. Maybe I'd start smoking. And then I might adopt five dogs. And then I'll move to Chicago, but I might come back. You never know.

BARNEY

Did you get her number?

TED

No, but I don't have to.

BARNEY (slaps him upside the head.)

I was going to say something, but that's better.

(slaps him again.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

TED

No, we'll meet again. It's destiny. And I have a plan on how to stalk her.

LILY

Oh, Ted, stalking is never a sure way to meet someone. People move, you know. They move, or get carried off by bigfoot, or they fall through the grates on the sidewalk, and then you're you-know-where.

BARNEY

Under where.

LILY

Hahaha.

ROBIN

No entiendo, locas, no entiendo!

PSYCH

Corte.

E: We should eat.

O: Maybe.

E: I'll go get something.

O: Ok.

E: Unless you want to go.

O: No, that's ok, I trust you.

E: I'll go.

O: Don't get bit by a snake. I would hate it if you got bit by a snake.

E: Right, I'll die from a snakebite out here in the middle of paradise.

O: Do you think this is paradise?

E: Unless it's just a very close approximation.

Dear Diary: Today I got bit by a snake and died. Some fucking paradise.

(So now she's walking through the woods and gets bit by a snake.)

When Eurydice goes, she knows she's going to be gone for a long time, but she doesn't know she will be gone forever. When Eurydice gives in to the poison and feels the ecstasy of the bite, she knows that she will be outside of herself, but she doesn't know that she will be outside of herself forever.

(The bite, the trance, the dance.)

IV:

i: Have you ever lost somebody?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

u: I have, but I lose somebodies all the time. That's kind of how it works.

i: How what works?

u: Love. That's how love works. You meet somebody, and you jump into the river. You don't even think. You shouldn't think. You just jump into the river and that's how it goes.

i: Then what happens?

u: Then what? You know what. You know what happens. Everyone knows what happens.

i: Tell me.

u: I don't have to tell you, that's what porn is for.

i: Oh, I see. That's what happens.

u: Exactly. And when you're lucky, it happens for a long time. Or sometimes it only happens once or twice. But it doesn't matter, it always stops eventually.

i: I see.

u: It always stops, and then you are on the banks of the river, and you're dry, and you get so very sad and lonely, and then it happens again, and you jump in again.

i: And you don't think about it?

u: What's there to think about?

i: Aren't you afraid you'll get hurt?

u: I'm always afraid I'll get hurt. But there's nothing to fear, because I know that I'll always get hurt, and I also know that it will always happen again.

3. E's descent into the Underworld.

I'm sorry I haven't been entirely clear. There's a story here, and it's just like everything that happens on TV, except on TV you're given all the information, and I haven't been doing that, because I've been distracted. I'm really sorry. It's been kind of a hard year, and it's so hard to concentrate these days. It's not your fault. You couldn't possibly know.

(O talking to Medicine Woman, signing papers.)

MW: You need to initial these and sign here.

O: I'll get to see her?

MW: No. No, you don't get to see her. That's what this all is, that's what this deal is, you go get her and bring her back, you get to have her back, but until you get her back, you don't have her back, so you can't look at her until you're back, and that's when you have her back.

O: I don't understand.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

MW: You can't look at her.

O: Ok.

MW: At all. You're with her in the Underworld, but you don't look at her.

O: Ok, I see.

MW: Don't think about looking at her.

O: I won't, I miss her very much is all, I just miss her.

MW: You miss her. You're missing everything.

O: Like what?

MW: I don't know, like what, like you could be talking to someone who knows the history of everything, a real mother of the water of the world, you could be talking to someone who knows things, who can teach you things, but instead you're thinking about her so you don't think about asking any bigger questions.

O: Well, if I meet any mothers, I'll let you know.

MW: You wouldn't recognize me if you were looking me in the face. Let's go down.

(They descend.)

But that's how it is, isn't it? Every day we're met with ghosts, fantasmas verdaderas, and we're supposed to be spending time with them, but instead we brood about how we're not with the girl, even though we never really know who she really is, and we even suspect that we're not going to get her in this life, but will spend it pursuing her, in order to get distracted into finding what we're actually here to find. Porque también somos lo que hemos perdido.

This is the hard part, not because it's hard to talk about now, now that we're no longer we, at least not we in the same place and time. It's easy to talk about now because it's like remembering.

And remembering is all that I do.

It's all that I have.

It's been a long season, and my face feels like it wants to crack open, so that my other face can come out. But I'm afraid of what that looks like, I'm afraid I'll have gotten older.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

If I look in a mirror and see myself and see myself older, then this is a tragedy, because if I get older then that means I've also gotten over it, and I never intended to get over this.

No one should have to get over something like this.

III

i: So you miss her.

u: Always, I always miss her.

i: Do you think she misses you?

u: I hope so, but I don't know for sure, and it probably doesn't matter.

i: Why not?

u: Because it wouldn't change anything.

i: She's not coming back.

u: I know for sure she's not coming back.

i: How do you know for sure?

u: Because she died.

(The love bar / next)

ROBIN

I've been feeling so gloomy lately.

TED

Is it because you secretly know that you and I will get back together, and all of this is just a lie until then?

ROBIN

Hahaha, you're so funny and damaged, Ted. No, it's because I met a wonderful guy and he's gone away, to Minsk, to work on some secret government program.

LILY (making one of her inimitable faces;
she also sounds like she's trying to
sound black most of the time, but
it's not offensive at all)

I think you are confused, my dear.

MARSHALL

That's a whole different show entirely! Hahaha!

(He makes a weird goofy sound)

Uh-oh, I just laughed so hard a booger came out!

LILY (inimitably)

Booger!

(They all laugh and they laugh.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(Then the BARKEEP, a woman,
comes over.)

BARKEEP

Why don't you call me, Barney, are you too busy with your penis?

BARNEY

My penis is salty, like a sailor, I mean like batman, I mean like kelp.

LILY

I don't know what that even means.

MARSHALL

I think you mean chard. Everyone is eating organic chard in our neighborhood.

LILY

Oh, boy, and is it ever salty!

BARNEY

Salty chard, salty salty. Penis boobs and big screen TVs.

ROBIN

There's something in my soul that's wrong. There's a lighthouse somewhere in me, something that goes on when it's very, very patriarchal. I mean dark. It's something like a light that recognizes things when they are dark, and the people around me who looked like they knew me will show themselves as nothing but phantoms, phantoms who are all absolutely terrified and absolutely asleep. And the world gets a little bit colder, because all of the things I ever wanted are not meant to be.

BARNEY

I'm sorry, I didn't realize I was sitting next to Baudelaire.

Baudelaire was one of the decadent poets, who lived with his mother in Paris, and who's penis rotted off when he was fifty.

BARNEY

Hey, guys! High five, I just remembered my penis again!

TED

Robin would love me even if my penis rotted off. We were meant to be.

MARSHALL

No, you weren't, Ted, listen, sing a bro song with me.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(Top hat and coat, song and dance,
a song about time escaping
through the edges of our
fingernails, and no one remembers
when they felt young, because we
all feel so old.)

THEY SING

Time escapes and death comes quick and beauty fades and we are all
just phantoms.
We go down slow,
We go down slow,
We go down slow,
Into our death and life is just a series of slow and painful inoculations.
But I have a man cave,
I have a man cave,
My cave is a man cave,
And it's legen...wait for it...dairy!

(and so on and so forth.)

LILY

I'm not showing anyone my boobs.

(Long pause, no one asked. This is
suddenly so very awkward,
especially after such an amazing
Bro Dance Number.)

ROBIN

If he never returns from Minsk, I'll still wait for him, and grow so very
old, and there will be nothing left of me to give, but no one will ask,
time is not mine, it's all only borrowed, and I am heavy with the....

TED

...with the hundred loves who crucified me.

ROBIN

Yes.

(Their eyes meet, they recognize
each other, this is a moment, it's
sudden and it's fierce and it's got
them in its jaws, and it shakes
them until all of their desire comes
bleeding out and they fall on each
other like wounded soldiers.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

BARNEY

My penis. My white plume. My jar of absinthe. And my horrible angry soul.

(And LILY and MARSHALL look toward the future with hope, so unaware that they are already dead. And so it is at the Love Bar on another cold night.)

And while she is being turned into something else, forever and utterly, Orpheus is spending time wondering when she will be back, and he doesn't know that he is being turned into something else, utterly and forever, because it's at this moment of waiting for her to come back, this moment right here, where he will be frozen in time. All dark lovers think they cannot bear it, that they cannot go on like this, that they cannot go on. But they do, for much longer than they could imagine.

We're living in the mirror before we can be born, and all the dark lovers go back to never being born.

I

i: When you lost them, did it hurt?

u: It really didn't. Not at first. But a month later it started to hurt.

i: And when did it stop hurting?

i: It never stops hurting.

You think you can't live without the one you lost, except you do, and no one knows how that's even possible, but it is. That's when you enter an enchanted world, and the ones who enter it in darkness are the ones who learn how to see.

II

i: Have you always been like that? Not attached to anyone or anything?

u: Not always, I suppose.

i: When you hear about people losing people, does it ever make you sad?

u: I'm sorry for them, because they're missing out.

i: Missing out on what?

u: On seeing the world as a pet, a pet that does tricks.

i: Are these tricks just for you?

u: I like to think so.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(It's a love bar oh yes a love bar.)

(Now. TED puts ROBIN on the table and speaks to her, hoping she will not speak back to him, because that will ruin his spell.)

TED

I want every woman I ever had a crush on to come and stand with you, but most of them couldn't make it, so you'll have to stand in for them. Which is fine. You're a lot of people. This could work. And if you were the girl from high school, the one I was with when we got caught by the police for fogging up the window's of my mom's car, I would tell you: I miss that night, and I remember wanting it to last forever, and maybe it did. And if you were the woman I was married to once, I would tell you that I miss the apartment, not the first one, but the second one, where all the world was green, and by then I was already older, so I had things that I wanted to do, habits and needs of the body that had nothing to do with where we were at that moment, that kept me out of there, and I miss being there, and I wish I could go there again, but I can't find the road, I forgot the turn, the four-way stop before our place, I remember the stop, but I don't remember how to get there, and I have a feeling that I wouldn't recognize the right turn.

ROBIN

It was a left turn.

MARSHALL

Oh my god, Robin, this is just a metaphor! It's just a metaphor!
(He screams like a boy on a playground, he's so like that.)

TED

So this, this is all impossible, it's an impossible want, but when I'm looking, and the world is sweet and green and everything else is possible because this singular thing is impossible, and can never be real. But you, you're close, you were very close, you were the only one who could hold it for longer than a short while, because, not because you are a mermaid, you are not a mermaid, because you love them as much as I do, because you're looking for the same thing, and that's why my love for you will never die. If you came back, I would drop everything and run at you with the strength of an elephant, and no power on earth could stop me from making me wake you up, so I could see that look in your eye, the one you get when you're finally here, the one you have right as you recognize me. This has been going on for a very long time.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

ROBIN

I wonder if polyamory might be a way out of all of your problems, Ted.

BARNEY (Enters)

Hi Dad, I mean Pope, I mean Ted. Guys, I had a dream that we were all on Sabado Caliente, and there was a mermaid who looked like Marshall. Can we please try that?

LILY

Oh Barney, don't forbell the ombligo! Ah! I mean umbrella! Nambala sonofabitch!

(She breaks, this is a blooper and they all love it. Laughs and funny comments.)

Una vez mas, por favor?

Cut.

LILY

Barney, don't forget the umbrella!

(And it's a dance on the beach, Sabado Caliente.)

SONG:

Sigue, sigue.
Sigue, sigue.
Abre tus ojos,
Abre la boca,
Abre la memoria,
Que no podemos olvidar.
Pinga solada,
Pinga solada,
Ai ai ai.
Sigue, sigue,
Sigue, sigue.

BARNEY

Oh, this is very weird. I suddenly miss the first girl who ever said no to me. It was in the third grade, and I wanted to try a threesome on the playground, but no one knew where to put their things.

LILY (Talking like an old wizened black man)

Looks like our Barney is finally learning a life lesson, one we could all benefit from.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

TED

Can't stop dancing.

NARRATOR (live):

The world was set in motion, there were patterns in the first moment, patterns that would repeat, but they would repeat based on our own ability to ignore or reflect the patterns, and this, this is what happens, things are falling forward and that's what happens.

(The bite, the trance, the dance.)

(Oh my god it's the love bar of death.)

(In the middle of this strange rite, something is happening to BARNEY, something legen...wait for it. Keep waiting. No, stop waiting. It will not come. It cannot. Because tonight the Love Bar is the Death Bar.)

(There are three new friends that come into the bar, but it turns out they are all old friends of BARNEYS.)

BARNEY

Oh my gosh, my friends. I have not seen you in ages, and you all have keys to unlock my sticky hamper, I mean childhood. Look, everyone, look at my friends.

THREE FRIENDS (variously, improvise like you actor-types do.)

No, Barney, they cannot see us, only you can see us, we come to tell you sad news, we all died, suddenly, and out of the blue, and it should come as a shock. We are all dead now.

BARNEY

Oh, my gosh, this sucks.

(The 3 FRIENDS are at the table, drinking everyone's drinks, and eating all the peanuts out of the pretzel bowl.)

MARSHALL

Is this fun, or what?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

BARNEY

Marshall, I pity you because cannot see beyond this thin veil, none of us are really here, we are all phantoms.

MARSHALL

Oh, Barney, don't let my happy go lucky horny puppy dog backward ways deceive you. I see them, too, the living and the dead, they are always mixing with each other, and in the end, there is no difference.

LILY (Like Gary Coleman, fake black, but
not offensive at all.)

What choo talkin about Marshall?

MARSHALL

Barney sees the dead, Lily, and so do I.

ROBIN

I am already dead, because I am Canadian.

TED

I don't think that means anything.

ROBIN

Oh, I'm out of Canadian jokes.

LILY

Don't you mean oot?

(They all laugh, but this is no time for laughs, this is the beginning of the dance of the dead, and they all fall on the floor and shake and writhe with their own deaths, they are dancing their own deaths. It is horrific.)

(And BARNEY dons a black robe and comes forward.)

BARNEY

Love song for this year so far. Dear Year So Far: You can suck a big dog dick. These lessons, these lessons you send us, we get them, and they're not very interesting. You are as thin as a skeleton, and although I find you so very lovely, you are so thin this year, and you know how I like a little meat on the bone, and this is all death and disappointment.

MARSHALL

Wow, Barney sure gets gloomy when a girl doesn't text him back.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

BARNEY

She was three, little man, she was triplets!

MARSHALL

Triplets! You're out of control!

BARNEY

But it didn't work out. There is no great erotic memoir, only talk, it's all talk.

MARSHALL

I don't think anything really ever happens anyway, not until we talk about it.

BARNEY

Then we should only talk about excess and expenditure.

MARSHALL

I think I'm going to ask Lily to marry me again for the third time. Because it's romantic. And I'm so insecure.

BARNEY

We are all just phantoms.

(Gloomy end of scene.)

(The bar of death and loss)

(That scene was such a goddam laugh riot that it takes a very long time for everyone to calm down. This is the next scene. It's the bar, but calm and no one is dancing.)

(And no one should dance, because this is going to be so sad.)

ROBIN

I have big news! I'm moving to Chicago!

MARSHALL

We always knew you had it in you!

BARNEY

I wish it was me.

LILY

Who'm I gonna have erotic and confusing dreams about now, hon? Aw, I'm gonna miss you so much.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(LILY gets weepy but she always does, and while she is weepy BARNEY tries to take a picture of her breasts.)

(But TED is so quiet.)

MARSHALL

Are you all right, Ted?

TED

That's wonderful news, Robin, I always thought you had--

(But he sobs and weeps and can't go on, and while he weeps, BARNEY tries to take a picture of his breasts.)

ROBIN

I'm gonna miss you guys, too, but wow, this is my chance, my one shot to really make it big in a city that's not as big as this one.

MARSHALL

Everybody gather round, we're going to do a shot of their oldest whiskey.

ROBIN

I hate whiskey.

MARSHALL

You don't know this whiskey! It's really old! It's older than, than, than Canada!

ROBIN (bursts out laughing)

Eso no tiene ni puta de sentido!

MARSHALL

Yo me olvidaba mi linea! Una vez mas por favor?

(They break.)

TED

Do you know what you're doing?

ROBIN

I do, I'm moving to Chicago.

TED

No. You're losing me.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

ROBIN

I don't lose you. You don't lose me. You'll see me again.

TED

I don't. I lose you forever.

ROBIN

You don't know that, you don't know how it ends.

TED

Actually, I do, I know exactly how it ends, we never see each other again.

ROBIN

I don't think I know what you really want here.

TED

Of course you don't. Listen. What if we're really, really old. What if we've been around a lot longer than we think, what if we've done this before.

ROBIN

This moment?

TED

This moment, yes, and the one before, all of them, what if we've done this before, and what if we've been doing this before for more than 500 years.

BARNEY (Off camera)

Quientos años?! Con la misma mujer? Hijole, hay que lanzar.

(They bust up.)

ROBIN

Una vez mas, por favor?

When Eurydice is in the Underworld, she starts to understand for the first time that we have to do things that we don't want to do, because we are called to do them, to be the one to do this thing that no one else can do, because there is an order to things. And to participate in the order means to spin in the same direction that the world spins. And there's something like grace in that. But she also understands that within the motion of the spinning, there is room for improvisation. And she is becoming something else. And we can't see any of it.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

4. O follows E into the Underworld.

MW: You can hear her.

O: I can't hear anything but my own footsteps.

MW: Now you can hear her.

O: I can hear crying.

MW: Now you can hear her.

O: Is she happy? Can you see her? Can you tell me, does she look happy?

IV

i: Are you sure it'll always happen again?

u: I'm sure.

i: What if you get old?

u: That doesn't matter. Old people fall in love all the time. Don't you see movies?

i: I haven't seen a lot of movies, not about that, not about old people falling in love. But then again, this isn't Europe. Or Latin America. Here, everyone who falls in love is around 30.

u: Around 30? What about Romeo and Juliet?

i: No one really believes in that anymore.

u: Then they're missing out. People fall in love all the time, and it doesn't matter if you're very young or very old, it still happens.

i: But what if you're really old and things don't work any more?

u: Then we'll just find other things to do together. There's a lot to do in this world, there's never any chance of running out of things to do.

(The love bar/ more)

(Oh there's always more.)

(This night, TED is looking at all of his text messages from the last few months, he's looking for secret signs.)

TED (looking at his phone)

Right here, this one right here, look at this smiley face. Do you see that?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

MARSHALL

Ted, buddy, listen. My homegrown midwestern good horse sense is finely tuned tonight, and I can tell you that the smiley face there is nothing more than a "shucks-a-gimmee."

(VOICE-OVER)

Marshall understood it better than I did. You see, 15 years ago when we were all just teenagers, there was one girl in class that everybody loved. Her name was Mazzie, and she was the first goth in Minnesota. She would put smiley faces on all the notes from all the boys and girls who wanted her.

FLASHBACK:

MARSHALL gets a note from the
GOTH GIRL, who smiles at him.

MARSHALL

I love this note.

GOTH GIRL

I am not going to have sex with you. Ever.

MARSHALL

But I'm so clumsy it's charming.

GOTH GIRL

It makes me want to spit blood.

BACK TO SCENE:

TED

I had no idea a smiley face meant she wants to spit blood at me.

MARSHALL

Ted, chicks always want to spit blood, we're lucky when they don't. And when they don't, buddy, it's magic. That's what I have with Lily.

TED

Oh, just fuck off.

(Long bro silence. He keeps
looking at his phone.)

On October 21st, the day after I did a voodoo spell on her hair, she wrote me this..."Hahaha, I don't know what's wrong with me today, my head is full of xs and os." Right there, that means she wants to make out. And I missed it.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

MARSHALL

I wonder if Lily ever did voodoo on me.

TED

And right here, the day after that, she wrote this, look, this is at 7 in the morning, she's never up at 7 in the morning, she must have been sleepless, thinking about me.

BARNEY

Or still up from the night before, doing the "wah-wah-wah," with a coupla strangers, what?

TED

She writes: "You and I will never be able to wear the same clothes."

MARSHALL

Lily always wears my clothes, like she wants to possess me, possess my very soul. She's an incubus. Or a succubus. I can't tell the difference.

BARNEY

Succubi suck, and incubi, it's all ink, they write notes and spit blood.

TED

Wow, she always loved me.

MARSHALL

I think Lily is putting spells on me, I think she has a doll that looks like me in her purse and she makes me do things that I wouldn't do, like pretend that I'm not Jewish.

TED

I understand what it is she wants now, I understand for the very first time.

(He goes out looking for her.)

MARSHALL

He's under a spell, too. This is bullshit.

(To the sky, to the gods.)

This is bullshit!

BARNEY

I need a linguist. Or a therapist. Maybe a speech therapist.

(And scene.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

5. O&E meet in the Underworld.

I.

i: have you ever decided to get someone back?

u: like in revenge?

i: no, not revenge. to go get them, to try to make them
come back to you.

(long pause.)

u: i didn't know you could do that, how do you do that?

(They're in a bar, a love bar, it's the
bar, the bar, the bar where they
love, they talk about love in the bar
of love.)

One

BARNEY

Check it, three twins last night. High five. There were five and then
there was me.

ROBIN

Six.

BARNEY

Oh, not right now, thanks, I just had twins.

(Laughs)

ROBIN

There were six, if there were three twins, there were six.

BARNEY

Yeah, but one got away.

(Laughs)

TED

There's always one that gets away.

MARSHALL

Don't go there, Ted. Getting all schweezie-meezie.

LILY

Schweezie-meezie!

(M&L make out on the table, lots
and lots of tongue, it's so funny
that they break character.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

MARSHALL

Una vez mas?

DIRECTOR (She slaps her head, this is outrageous)

Para!

Two

TED

There's always one that gets away.

MARSHALL

Don't go there, Ted. Getting all schweezie-meezie.

LILY

Schweezie-meezie!

(M&L make out on the table, lots and lots of tongue)

ROBIN (sings, like a bird)

Schweezie, and meezie, a-schweezie and a-meezie.

(They all join in the song, like birds.)

Schweezie, and meezie, a-schweezie and a-meezie. Schweezie, and meezie, a-schweezie and a-meezie. Schweezie, and meezie, a-schweezie and a-meezie. Schweezie, and meezie, a-schweezie and a-meezie. Schweezie, and meezie, a-schweezie and a-meezie.

(This turns into a very elaborate dance number, one that someone's sister will have to choreograph, and the dance number is bright and glittery, but just for a moment. Then, in mid-song):

TED

Every time I love, and lose, a part of me dies.

(Laughs)

It's not funny.

(Laughs)

The first time was funny. The second, maybe. But it keeps repeating. It just keeps repeating. I'm trapped. I'm trapped in time and everything keeps repeating and I can't do anything to stop it.

(He gets so gloomy that they have to cut.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

DIRECTOR

Para.

(The DIRECTOR is crying, because this is her story.)

DIRECTOR

Hay, pobrecito, que lastima, que lastima, compartimos el mismo dolor.

(DIRECTOR and TED cry together.)

Three

Dance number:

They Sing:

Schweezie, and meezie, a-schweezie and a-meezie. Schweezie, and meezie, a-schweezie and a-meezie. Schweezie, and meezie, a-schweezie and a-meezie. Schweezie, and meezie, a-schweezie and a-meezie. Schweezie, and meezie, a-schweezie and a-meezie.

(This starts off all glitzy but then becomes a very slow dance of death.)

(In the end, no one is laughing because death is coming to claim them all.)

(The bite, the trance, the dance.)

medicine woman: she's here.

o: i know.

mw: you can't look at her. that's the deal.

o: i know.

mw: you can't look.

o: i won't.

mw: you can't.

(they move.)

o: are you her mother?

mw: i'm everyone's mother.

o: you're my mother?

(mw doesn't answer.)

mw: here she is. keep your head down.

e: don't look at me.

o: i won't.

e: it's good to see you.

o: it's good to hear you. i wish i could see you. i like how you look at me.

e: i wish you could look at me.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

o: i can't.

e: i heard.

6. O&E ascend to the Earth.

II.

i: have you ever tried to make someone come back to you?

u: oh, hell, no.

IN THE BAR.

(The WITCHAY WOMAN comes on the telly-do we say that here?-with special instructions for them)

WITCHAY WOMAN

Mira, this is a public service message to all of you overbred, privileged rich kids in the greater city area: What the hell are you doing with your lives? You talk about all the things you want, all the time, and you have everything handed to you, all the time, and you still have no idea what it means to follow your heart's desire. Listen. I can help you. I will even help you for free, if you just learn how to listen to your heart's desire. But you forgot. You forgot what it means to have the wind, the oceans and the rivers, the fire that comes from lightning, flowing through your veins and up and down your spine, and all the things your grandmothers knew. And if you think for a second that just because you forgot your grandmothers, that your grandmothers have forgotten you, ai, pinche pendejas, you. Are. Wrong. Please take a few deep breaths with me, and count backwards from 5, and I will begin breaking your bones like the branches of a tree, and turn the honey in your blood to bile, and open up the holes in your face so you can remember. This is a love spell. Put your names on the paper provided and pull out your hair by the root and leave these things to me, and count backwards from 5. 4. 3. 2...

(And the bar scene turns into a rite. What will this rite be? You'll have to wait and see....)

BARNEY

My therapy started, and just watch. Pa, pa, pa, pope, pa, pa, pa, pope. Hoo, ha, hoo, ha, hoo, ha, hahaha. Unique rabbit, broken badger, a snake, a snake, a snake.

7. O turns around and E has to descend again.

III.

i: have you ever tried to go back, to find someone you lost?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

u: i always try to find people i lose, life is too short
not to try.

i: you don't think, you know, when it's over, it's over?

u: it's never over, nothing is ever over, if we remember
anything, it's not over.

i: what happened?

u: when?

i: when you went looking.

u: oh. well, i don't know yet. i'm looking right now,
i'll have to let you know how it turns out.

(Bar of death, bar of big and
terrible death.)

TED (v.o., v.o. being played by the
Gorton's fisherman)

We're all phantoms, and life is a dream, and love is impossible, but it's also very, very likely. That girl, the one I chased after, the one who became your mother, well, let's just say that some of us eventually marry ourselves, and some of us marry our opposites, who are also ourselves, and a lot of us settle for something very much in between. Of course, some of us figure it out, that the game is fixed from the very start. And we fight it until we get caught up in something else, because something else always sucks us in to a bigger story, we're phantoms in a story that we don't ever really see.

(Now the scene.)

It all started off calmly enough, on one wintry afternoon.

BARNEY

I can't, I just can't, I simply cannot! I don't like them, I really just don't like them at all!

LILY

Uh-oh, now what rough beast slouches toward Bethlehem waiting to be born?

BARNEY

This all, none of it, it's just not working for me. No matter how much porn, no matter how much excess, no matter how much I give in, I am still so very, very unfulfilled, and I wish just once I could have the perfect threesome with a loving man, I mean ski slope, I mean rottweiler, I mean cowboy.

(This signifies a sudden and
stunning set change where he is
suddenly in the therapist's office,
and it happens so fast that we
don't even notice, and we are
stunned. How did we get here? We

Appendix E: The Play Texts

don't know.)

PSYCH

Why does it have to be a mother?

BARNEY

This isn't about me, it's not about me at all.

PSYCH

That's more true than you know, sir, uh, what's your name?

BARNEY

You can call me Barney.

PSYCH

I'd rather not. What is your name, really?

BARNEY

I have no name.

PSYCH

Oh, good, that's good, that's really good. Now tell me, why are you here?

BARNEY

To find my heart's desire.

PSYCH

We are not here to find our heart's desire, we are here to plummet headlong into a terrible mess and to try to talk about it, and fail, and fail, and miss the mark entirely.

BARNEY

Oh.

PSYCH

You want what you think you want, but you never really want what you think you want, you want what you want, and you'll never really know what you want.

BARNEY

Because love is impossible.

PSYCH

No, because you're stupid, but you were close.

BARNEY

How will I ever learn what I want?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

PSYCH

Lots and lots of practice. But you also need a mirror. And peacock feathers. And straps and contraptions and things that are very expensive.

BARNEY

It's always expensive.

PSYCH

Of course it's expensive. If it's not expensive, then it won't mean anything to you. I mean, look at yourself. Money is your god.

BARNEY

My god, I mean, my money, I wish you could hang out with me and the guys.

(And there's another sudden and stunning set change and they are all at the bar.)

LILY

So Marsh, the big Marsh and I have decided that we're going to have five children in the next five years. It's our secret project to make ourselves into more of ourselves so that we can see ourselves reflected in geometrical progression so that we lose our fear of death.

MARSHALL

OHMYGOD IT WILL BE SO MUCH FUN TRYING!! SLOOP A DOOP A LISHIOUS!

ROBIN

And I've decided that without being able to have kids of my own, I will pursue my career recklessly above all other costs and make so much money that I might one day forget about all the things I really couldn't have. Because no matter what I do, it will never be enough.

MARSHALL

AND IT'S GOING TO BE SO MUCH FUN TRYING! MONEY IS SO AWESOME! AND BIGFOOT!

TED

Guys, I have something to say: I met the one who fits all the points of the Ted Map of Desire.

PSYCH

Show me this map of desire, Mr. Ted.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

TED

Who is she?

BARNEY

Don't worry about her, just pretend she's not here.

TED

But she's talking.

BARNEY

Just pretend she's not talking.

PSYCH

Show me this map.

TED (produces a very complicated map)

These lines right here represent the lines of flight, places where my own fantasy images come to life because of what she says or does.

PSYCH

Does it have to be a she?

TED

Hahaha, what kind of a question is that, I mean, do we look like a band of outsiders?

(They all laugh, hahaha, but not everyone understands why, and that's ok.)

TED

And these points here represent the order of events, the ones that have to unfold in this exact order or else there is no reason to even give her a fighting chance. Like here, on the second date, it has to be somewhere that we can photograph ourselves and put the pictures up so everyone can comment. And this point here is the second time we have sex, and it has to be a little awkward, because it's not as good as the first time, at which point all of the phantoms of our past relationships gather on the veranda to discuss, and oh, boy, is it serious! Hahaha. And this picture here shows how she gets a little bit of cum on her ear, but that's really optional.

MARSHALL

Optional but required!

LILY

Oh my, the things my ears has seen over the years.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

ROBIN

Please don't give us any more visuals.

MARSHALL

That's not how they do it in Canada, that's for sure.

ROBIN

I don't get your jokes any more.

PSYCH

I love this map, Ted, this map of yours intrigues me. Tell me about this, it looks like a little boy wetting his bed.

TED

Good eye, doctor. This right here is the moment I had my very first dream about Jesus giving Mary Magdalene a broach. The one she admired in the window for months and thought that no one noticed. But he noticed. Oh, he noticed.

PSYCH

I think we need to discuss this all a little further somewhere more....comfortable?

TED

Let's discuss right here, I'll put the map on the table and we'll discuss this right on top. Of the map.

(Oh, they can't stand it any more and they all make out on the map on the table, and although it could be very hot in other circumstances, here it's just terribly awkward and no one will speak to each other for the next three days. No one.)

(End Scene)

In the meantime, they ascend, Eurydice follows Orpheus, and they ascend, and we know what happens in the story, we know how this turns out, he turns around and sees her and it's done, she goes back down and he is on the earth's surface, mourning her for the rest of his life, until he is torn to bits by angry muses. That's what we already know. If she already knows that, and she must, because she's participating in the story again and we all really do know what stories we're in, if she knows, like we do, then she might understand that there's a chance that they could do something different this time around.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

O: I have two lists. One is all the things that I wanted to tell you, all the times that I thought, she should know about this.

E: What kinds of things are on the list?

O: Things that happened, things people said, and things I thought but didn't say out loud because only you would understand.

E: I have a list like that.

O: Good.

E: I never thought I'd get to tell you any of those things.

O: Pretty soon we can tell each other everything.

E: Pretty soon.

(They walk in silence.)

E: What's the second list?

O: That one, that one's a list of all the things that I never did learn how to say, when I knew you, and they're lists of things that I learned how to say since then.

E: Like secrets.

O: There's only secrets. At the end of the world and the beginning of the world, there's only secrets.

E: And that's where we are.

O: That's exactly where we are.

E: And there's light up there, and dark back there, so we can go in either direction.

O: Sure.

E: Or we can stop right here and not move anywhere.

O: Sure, but why would we stop right here?

E: I don't know. You just can't look at me. But we can stop right here, and you can't look at me, and anything else that we do or say can happen right here and maybe

Appendix E: The Play Texts

time will stop moving forward while we're right here,
maybe it will stop moving forward.

(Bar of death, and unholy
reckoning.)

(Three days later.)

PSYCH

I'm glad we're meeting here from now on, Mr. No Name.

BARNEY

My life is complex, and you have to see it unfold to really understand it.
You have to witness it as an outsider.

PSYCH

But there's no way I can observe it as a real outsider, Mr. Barney with No
Name, there is no such thing.

BARNEY

No, there is. You just have to be real quiet.

TED (enters, with a t-square)

Hi, Barney!

PSYCH

It doesn't matter. I am already a guilty witness, one with desires, plans,
and symptoms.

BARNEY

You are the most endlessly fascinating therapist I have ever known.

PSYCH

You flatter me, and I like that.

BARNEY

We all have our charms.

MARSHALL (enters, with a big plastic
monster toy)

Hi Barney!

PSYCH

I've been thinking over your case, and it's compelling, and it's
perplexing, but it's also very simple. Normally, I would never try to put
these things into words, because words are errors, but here I'll just say:
I don't think you're supposed to be with women.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(TED AND MARSHALL, they laugh
and they laugh.)

BARNEY

But if I'm not looking to spread my seed and replicate myself in every corner, I will disappear.

PSYCH

I think that would be a good idea.

MARSHALL

Clearly she's not getting the big picture.

ROBIN (enters, with an arab strap)

Hi, Barney.

PSYCH

I think that there are many people in this world who have lost their compass, their sense of stability, at one time or another, and those are the most interesting people in the world. And when you become your opposite, you'll see yourself very clearly for the first time.

BARNEY

And you know, she was right.

MARSHALL

Who are you talking to?

BARNEY

It was an idea so simple, so painfully simple, and so mad, that it dug at me for seven long days and 400 nights, and in the end, I woke up and decided to give it a go.

MARSHALL

Who is he talking to?

BARNEY

But first, I would have to make some big changes.

(And now, a dance number.)

SONG:

Big changes, are coming here come the big changes.
Here they come, they're really big,
They're coming and they're big.
Really big, here they come, big changes, wow. Chase me.

8. After. O sings about her. E does something else.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(Words on screen: Seeing Voices with Lyn. They are smoking thin French cigars on the veranda.)

I: Would you say this production, "Monsters of the Sea," the first part, is more or less autobiographical than your other works?

CD: Much less, interestingly enough.

I: Much less interesting, or much less autobiographical?

(Pause. They laugh. Oh, she is a lynx, this Lyn!)

CD: You are a lynx. Less autobiographical.

I: I'm a little skeptical.

CD: Look, all work is autobiographical, I mean, even a pure visual abstract it's all sight, the eye is the 'I.' Quantum alchemy and that whole movement, Baudrillard and the New Symposium. Don't leave out the elusive Jelly Worm. I'm not saying anything new.

I: I understand this one takes on Orpheus and Eurydice.

CD: Yes, so what?

I: It just seems like familiar territory, that's all. We've seen this before.

CD: Hm. I suppose. That's interesting. Mm. That's interesting.

(Long pause. He starts to play with his phone. It's very passive aggressive. Pause.)

I: How is this Eurydice different?

CD: Aha. Three things. First, there's a video, and this time, if you watch the video, you'll see the whole story, and you'll say to yourself, Mm, this story. And then there's television. Because everything happens on television, the story of Orpheus and Eurydice happen on How I Met Your Mother.

I: Why that show?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

CD: Because, out of all the shows on television, the relationship between Pam and Jim is the most complex today. At least in the first three seasons. And it ends so sad, when she moves away to go to art school and never comes back and that's it. No Hollywood ending there, it's very Greek. Except the actors are not Greek.

I: I don't think you're talking about the thing you think you're talking about.

CD: That's because we're all performing, no one's listening any more. It's exactly like Grotowski predicted.

I: Is there an audience for this in Phoenix?

CD: I think there is. I've talked to lots of people here, not necessarily Greek, and it seems like everyone is having a terrible time of it, a terrible Spring, a lot of deaths, a lot of inconvenient shopping trips, and some real confusion lately.

I: Confusion about?

CD: Oh, the usual. Getting older. Everyone's turning 46 lately, or 23 or so, and we're all confused.

I: That all sounds very lofty, but I do detect a bit of your personal history in there.

CD: Where?

I: Have you ever met Eurydice?

CD: More times than I can remember.

I: Aha, so this is based on that.

CD: I suppose, I suppose it has to be.

I: Is she someone specific then?

CD: As specific as you and I are specific. Eurydice and Orpheus are always around, but they're always changing.

I: Is this Eurydice someone specific?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

CD: Absolutely not.

I: She's not that woman you ran into in the parking lot?

CD: Oh, my gosh, you heard about that?

I: It's a story that I can't forget. Would you please tell it so our readers can know?

CD: No. It's too personal.

I: Is she Eurydice?

CD: Absolutely, yes.

I: Did you ever see her again?

CD: I did, I saw her out of the corner of my eye. And then I turned so she could take up space in all of my eye, not just the corner. I looked at her, and when she looked at me, and she arched her back and did this hair thing. That's flirty, right?

I: I don't know.

CD: She was looking at me like (he looks), and then she turns like (he turns), and she keeps looking, and I'm all, and she's like, flirty. Right?

I: Sure. Flirty. She's probably hopelessly in love with you.

CD: Oh, my god. That's so sad.

I: You didn't talk to her?

CD: I didn't! I tried. But then I got distracted by someone who wanted to talk about my motorcycle, and then she was gone.

I: That is, without a doubt, the saddest and most beautiful story I've ever heard.

CD: My heart is very young. I think in my heart, I'm 15 or 16 years old.

I: You sound 16.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

CD: Thank you. I'm still a teenager.

I: I'm sure you are. Otherwise, you'd be wearing shirts with collars by now. So this play, it's really about her?

CD: The woman in the parking lot?

I: Yes.

CD: Why not? It could be about her. She might come to see it, and recognize herself...

I: And then she could start liking your posts on facebook, and by the time you're really old, you'll be texting each other, and maybe you'll even make out once before you die.

CD: Hahaha, very funny, fuck off.

I: So it's about someone you don't really know.

CD: No, not at all. It's about someone I think I know. I'm making this for someone I think I know.

Don't you have someone secret in mind, all the time, someone you suspect knows all of your dark thoughts and thinks they're beautiful, someone who has been to dark places and can tell you about the dark places, and wants to hear you tell your stories about your own dark places?

I: Yes.

CD: This is for them.

(Next scene:)

TED (this is a ted talk)

After I covered myself in small pieces of bloody cloth, covering and cleaning all of my wounds, I put my face on the ground, on the sheet on the ground, and that's when I started to think about you. Because I am who I am, and you are where you are, I started to chew on the ground, to try to chew the ground beneath the sheet, and my teeth couldn't get a grip on the ground, and it was wasted, except not at all wasted. Because it told me what I wanted to do, where my heart lives right now, I want to touch you with my mouth but there is all of this graveyard dirt in the way, and it's a meal that I cannot have, apparently, apparently I cannot eat, I want to eat but I can't eat, and that's where I live. Which

Appendix E: The Play Texts

will be either terribly disturbing or terribly sweet, depending on how you feel about me, and that's something that I'm not allowed to know, apparently. But for me, I know, I know that, and it's not terribly revealing, really, to say that at the root of all of this is this strange recognition of a whole bunch of Ancestors underneath all of this, under my clothes, under your clothes, we're not unclothed but utterly naked in the presence of other spirits, those who came before, and for whatever reason, they are speaking, and they are speaking of holiness and that same fire of hunger that was there at the beginning of everything. Except when you live forward in time, in time that moves forward, there are all the usual confusions that go with living in a body with memories and children and lovers and burials, except, the second layer of except is more than the first except. When you live in the circle, in time that moves in a circle, there is no death, only birth, one birth that leads naturally into the next birth, and I am starting to see for the very first time that these metaphors for birth really don't refer to the physical act of birth, of being born, because our own physical birth is already a metaphor for something else, some very important secret that can only be answered in being born.

(Scene: E in the Underworld. She has his phone and sends him a message.)

E: I don't know if you'll get this. I'm sending this from far away. You left your phone. It's about to die, and there's no charger, so I want to make sure this is important, like I don't want to waste any time, because we always waste so much time, and everything turns out to be so much shorter than we could ever imagine. You found me. That's important. I found you. And I learned here that everything we do can be repeated. Goddesses come to earth and goddesses die, and goddesses can come back. So keep these two things in mind: one, if you keep repeating, then you are no longer in time, you are in a ritual, and you are making a ritual out of something that happened. But it's no longer something that happens. Two, we have no better choice than to keep repeating. Because, really, nothing ever happens, really, everything is a repetition, really. Everything. I miss you, and I will repeat, I miss you, and I will repeat, I miss you, and I. Will. Repeat.

(Hospital for lost souls. Barney has a happy place in his pants for you.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

TED (V.O., this time as Ted Danson)

It was going to be hard to wait for Robin to get reincarnated as Ted Danson, but I was determined to try.

(TED is in the hospital, sleeping in a bed next to ROBIN, who is dead. All the others, LILY, MARSHALL, BARNEY, are sleeping in the bed, too. MARSHALL's leg is twitching.)

BARNEY

Stop twitching.

MARSHALL

I can't help it.

LILY

Oh, my god, this is impossible.

TED

I can't stand this any more, I think I will go mad.

(MARSHALL snores and twitches.)

BARNEY

We need a nurse to distract us.

TED

Nothing can distract me from the grief that has me in its teeth.

LILY

Aw, that's sweet. You really miss her, even though she's right here. She never really went away, because she lives in our hearts.

BARNEY

She lives in our hearts, but she smells up our bed. High five, can I get a high five? Anyone?

(No one high fives him, except for the doctor, that is. Enter DOCTOR VODKA, with great fanfare, trailed by an assistant, who might be a mannequin. There's music that follows him, maybe the Internationale.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

DOCTOR VODKA

Good morning, my friends, good morning, it's such a wonderful clear day, and the sky is as bright as the eyes of a baby seal, pure, and courageous, and good. This was a good war. Your friend, Rhonda--

TED

-- Robin.

DOCTOR VODKA

Sure. She fought the fight. The good fight. The brave fight. She fought. And it was glorious.

LILY

But she died.

DOCTOR VODKA

I'm telling you right now, sweetie, that kind of talk isn't going to help her. She needs your positive thinking, right now that's the secret to all of this, you all have to stay positive.

MARSHALL

But she is dead.

DOCTOR VODKA

Why, that's not a word that's in my vocabulary, little man. I don't know the words Death, or Subversion, or Communism, or Literature.

BARNEY

What about Nose?

DV

Nose I know. I can talk about the nose for hours and hours, and I often do. Now. What questions do you have for me?

TED

There are no more questions, there is only death.

DV

I don't even know the word, sir. It's not in my vocabulary.

LILY

I have a question.

DV

Talk to me, honey, spell it out.

LILY

Can you make his leg stop twitching?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

BARNEY

Can you cut it off, maybe?

MARSHALL (sleeping)

Hee hee, don't cut off my leg, hee hee.

DV

Why that would cost extra. You don't have that kind of money.

BARNEY

We do, though, we have a lot of unexplained disposable income, and I could use my hooker money to help pay for the operation.

DV (High fives BARNEY)

We'll talk, sir. But first. Let's deal with the patient at hand. Your friend, Rachel--

TED

-- Robin.

DV

Yes, she is, I'm afraid, without the use of her hands. However. Everything else looks very good, and it's all going according to my plans, my greatest hopes, it's all like that, and well. I say Fuck Yes. Two words in my vocabulary. Fuck and Yes. Together they make Fuck Yes.

MARSHALL (Waking up)

Oh, listen to him, he's really good.

LILY

I think he's a she.

DV

I think gender is a performance, little lady, and it's contingent on social relations, and unfortunately, that does not enter here, because you cannot know me, no one can know me, because I am elusive, like the jelly worm.

TED

How can you say she looks good? She's dead.

DV

Sir, don't make me tickle you utterly with my bladey instruments.

LILY

Oh, like a speculum.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

DV

I don't speculate, I am a man, or woman, of hard throbbing rock solid veiny science.

MARSHALL

Goddam I love this wicked son of a bitch. Smart like a whip.

DV

You make me glow, sir, you understand me.

TED

So what's the prognosis, doctor?

DV

Why there's nothing to tell, sir. We'll get through this, and then we'll have plenty of other options after this, and all of the options are positive, because we have options.

TED

What are the options?

DV

We'll get to those after we get through this.

TED

But she's really dead.

DV

Not on my watch.

TED

There's no pulse and no breath.

DV

You have to think positive.

TED

How?

DV

That's not up to me, that's between you and the philosophy you live by. I hope it's a strong one, sir, one that's not befuddled up with ambiguities and facts and your little scholar tricks of logic. You need a big god to get through this, and when you do, you'll remember the name Doctor Vodka.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

MARSHALL

You're amazing, you make me want to sell real estate to all my rich friends!

DV

That's the spirit, lad, that's the spirit that makes us great. Now, I've examined her, and I can tell you this: everything is as it should be, and that. Is all. You need to know.

LILY

And don't forget, Doctor!

DV

Yes, pumpkin?

LILY

We have love, and that's all we really need.

BARNEY

I like my love with a pair of rubber high heel shoes, easy to clean.

(Long pause, and the DOCTOR laughs loud and long and spooky and grabs BARNEY by the face.)

DV

Let's sing.

DV & BARNEY:

We need a little more than love,
Because love is really stupid,
And it leads us all into doing things
We wouldn't normally do or say,
And that's just so very awkward.

(Finale):

Awwwwwkward!

MARSHALL

Can I have her toast?

(And end scene.)

IV.

i: have you ever tried to bring back someone you lost?

u: of course.

i: what if it was certain that they were lost forever,
would you still try?

u: i can't imagine a situation where it's certain that
it's forever.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

i: you can't?

u: not as long as you're both still alive.

i: aha, but if one of you dies...

u: aha, that's another story.

i: then it's really over.

u: no, it's not, it's not over, it's just another story.

it's one of my favorite stories.

i: so you believe in hopeless, helpless, eternal love.

u: you forgot ridiculous. and yes, i do. but you need to include ridiculous, because it's all ridiculous.

i: did it ever work? did you ever find someone you lost?

u: constantly. we always meet again and again.

i: what happens when you meet again?

u: sometimes it's more ridiculous than other times.

sometimes you meet again and you both think there might be a spark still there, and you find out there's not.

other times you find out that there is a spark, but it doesn't last very long, that time around, it's very short and kind of sweet and then it's kind of sad. but the worst is when the spark is there, but you're both with someone new, or something permanent, and that's bad because there's nothing you can do.

i: that sounds hard.

u: it is, but it's also my favorite.

i: why is that your favorite?

u: because you're the most helpless, you're utterly upside down, you're hanging upside down, and that's when you're the most vulnerable, and that's when you find out that love isn't about being together, it's about something else.

i: what?

u: what?

i: what something else?

u: i have no idea, really, no one knows, really, but it's why we're here.

i: hm.

u: we really have no idea why we're here, the things we think we know, we don't really know. the reasons we think we're doing things, chasing after this or that or falling in or out of love, it's really not the reason. we don't really know the reason, it's always much bigger than we suspect, and we're closest to that thing when we're stuck, hanging upside down, full of longing and love for someone we can't have, when we're doing what we were born to do.

i: and we'll never know why?

u: why do we need to know why? i don't even think it would matter if we did know why, we're designed to fall in love again and again and get hurt and do it again, and it doesn't matter why.

b. Afterworld.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(The bar of death/moor)

BARNEY (in mourning cloak, a moment of weight)

Now that the dead are interred into the ground, and now that the bodies are starting to decay, and now that the weight of the memory is heavy on the living, and the dirt is heavy and cold on the dead, now that we are mortal, now that we are heavy with the guilt of having survived, now that we know this is more fragile than we were lead to believe, now that we know that the line between us is so very thin but absolute, now that we are one day older than we were yesterday, now that we are bridges, our faces are bridges between the last generation and the next, our bodies are carriages between one place and another, our eyes are bridges between yesterday and tomorrow, now that we are not yet old, but absolutely older, now that we miss you, now that we love you, now that the lovers yesterday are coming back, now that tomorrow's lovers are already leaving their shoes at the foot of our bed, now that we are more tired than we could have imagined, now that our eyes twitch even though we know you won't come back, now that our hands shake even though we know we won't be touching your body tonight, now that we are falling in love with being alive in these frail mortal bodies, now that we are stronger than we ever guessed, now that we know we are broken and will never be whole and don't want to be whole, now that we are haunted by the ghosts of the years' dead and the year is far from over, now that we are walking thin lines, now that we are the things that make the rude noises of this world and make it impossible to sleep through the night, now that we are the night, now that we are the lines between night and morning, now that the lines between the night and the morning are written on our stomachs by tomorrow's lovers, now that we are already just a memory, now that we are living inside a memory that we can't get our heads around, now that our hearts are drowning in the memory from which we don't wake up, now that we know we are sleeping, we are sleeping and we are night and we are memory and we are ghosts and we are falling in love with living in these bodies now we are falling in love with bodies now the weight of bodies on the earth are falling in love with us now we are closing the gates on the winter now we are the gates between the winter and the spring.

End of play

Appendix E: The Play Texts

2. romeo&juliet/VOID
MOTS2

(Scene: ALL.)

SUSAN

Am I going back?

ALL OTHERS (AO)

Yes.

SUSAN

Am I going back?

AO

Yes.

SUSAN

Am I going back?

AO

Yes.

SUSAN

Am I going back?

AO

Yes.

SUSAN

All the way back?

AO

All the way back.

(Scene: NURSE alone.)

NURSE

Remember, this is a love story. This is a love story that I want to tell, even though I'm too far inside of it to really tell it the way I think stories should be told. And I'll try, but I'll fail. I can just tell. I'll fail at it. From the start, there's something missing, from the beginning, this is broken. You can tell. Everyone here is playing a part that they know, in a story they don't understand. And the beginning, the first misunderstanding, is that Love and Death are separate, because it seems like they are supposed to be separate, except they're connected entirely, and it almost seems as though one cannot exist without the other.

(Pause.)

We're in the underworld, this is the land of the dead, where the dead speak. This is a night in the land of the dead. My daughter, Susan, is inconsolable in her bedroom, having been born to die too soon.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SUSAN

I was younger than anyone when I died. I was so much younger than anyone.

NURSE

Juliet is inconsolable in her grave, having loved and lost her life too soon.

JULIET

It was a great love story until we died.

NURSE

Romeo is dead but remember anything.

ROMEO

This is all in my head.

NURSE

He is still chasing after Juliet, and still missing Roslyn, and probably can't even tell them apart. Roslyn is inconsolable in her room, never having been born after her birth.

ROSLYN

I don't even want to talk about it.

NURSE

And Mercutio is gone insane, doesn't know if he is dead or alive, and insane.

MERCUTIO

I was going to say something funny and smart but I'm too tired.

NURSE

He might be the only one here who is able to fall in love again, the rest are frozen in this one moment, when Romeo saw Juliet for the first time. Please meet the characters. Really, let's meet the characters.

(They all go out and shake hands
with the audience.)

ALL

Howdy howdy howdy, welcome welcome, can you see? You can move if you can't see. Enjoy the show, it's going well so far, you came on a really good night, etc.

NURSE

Remember: this is a love story. This isn't the first one, and it won't be the last, it's just one that keeps happening, again and again. Like you, the first time I saw it, I saw myself in it. By the third time, I stopped seeing myself, the fifth time I stopped caring any more, but after that, sometime after that, I started to see myself again, in the margins, and I didn't like who I was, but I couldn't deny that this looked as though I had written it myself. This here, this next part, you'll remember this next part, but it's here as a reference so you know what we're talking about.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(Street.)

R

Sad hours.

M

What sadness?

R

Not having.

M

Love?

R

I am in love.

M

That love. Gentle and rough.

R

That love. Laugh?

M

No, coz, I weep.

R

At what?

M

At oppression.

R

Too much. Love is a smoke. My coz. I am not here.

M

Who.

R

What?

M

Tell me who.

R

I love a woman.

M

I supposed.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

R

She'll not. She will not.

M

Chaste.

R

Huge waste. I live dead.

M

Forget to think of her.

R

Teach me how I should forget to think.

M

Examine other beauties.

R

Teach me to forget.

M

Can you read? Can you read any thing you see?

R

If I know the letters and the language. I can read: Martino and his wife and daughters; Anselme and his sisters; Mercutio and his brother Valentine; uncle Capulet, his wife and daughters; Roslyn; Livia—

M

Roslyn. Go.

R

I'll go.

(They go.)

(Next. Inside.)

N

Juliet.

J

Nurse.

N

A man!

J

I'll look.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

N

Go, girl.

(End scene.)

(Street.)

R

Shall we?

M

Our entrance. Romeo, we must have you dance.

R

You have dancing shoes. I cannot move.

M

You are a lover.

R

Under love's heavy burden.

M

Love. A tender thing.

R

Tender? too rough.

M

Be rough with love. Prick love, beat love down. Come, knock and enter.

R

No.

M

Why?

R

I dream'd a dream to-night.

M

So did I.

R

Well, what was yours?

M

Dreamers often lie.

R

In bed.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

M

O, then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep;
Her wagon-spokes made of long spiders' legs,
The cover of the wings of grasshoppers,
The traces of the smallest spider's web,
The collars of the moonshine's watery beams,
Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of film,
Her wagoner a small grey-coated gnat,
Not so big as a round little worm
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid;
Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
Time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers.
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on court'sies straight,
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees,
O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream,
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues,
Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are:
Sometime she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit;
And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail
Tickling a parson's nose as a' lies asleep,
Then dreams, he of another benefice:
Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,
Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades,
Of healths five-fathom deep; and then anon
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes,
And being thus frighted swears a prayer or two
And sleeps again. This is that very Mab
That plats the manes of horses in the night,
And bakes the elflocks in foul sluttish hairs,
Which once untangled, much misfortune bodes:
This is the hag, when maids lie on their backs,
That presses them and learns them first to bear,
Making them women of good carriage:
This is she—

R

Peace.

M

I talk of dreams, as thin of substance as the air. We come too late.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

R

Too early.

(They go in.)

(Ballroom.)

R

What lady is that? I'll watch her.

(To J:)

Touch with a tender kiss.

J

My lips the sin.

R

Give me my sin again.

J

You kiss by the book.

N

Madam, your mother craves a word with you.

R

What is her mother?

N

Lady of the house, I nursed her daughter, I tell you, he that can lay hold of her shall have...

R

Unrest.

J

Nurse, what's he that now is going, that would not dance? Go ask his name.

N

His name is Romeo.

J

My only love, birth of love.

N

What's this?

J

A rhyme. One I danced.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(Scene: NURSE alone.)

NURSE

I'm going to try, and fail, to tell the whole story. I'm sorry I have to keep doing this, every time, but everyone keeps forgetting, every time, the whole story. It's not just you. I know it feels like it's just you, but it happens to everyone, and everyone notices it, and then they forget right away because it's too much. This one meets this one, this one sleeps with that one, that one falls in love with this one, and this one sleeps with both of those ones, and this one, the one most like you, thinks they are not in the same story as everyone else, except you are. Except, you, are. And one day, you fall in love, it's not the very first time, it's not even the third time, but it's the time that matters. Because time matters. And when you fall in love, in time, you start to matter, and it's not your story that starts on that day, it's the story, the story, this story, starts on the day that you fall into time, by falling into love, and nothing can help you after that day. It's too late.

(Scene: ROSLYN alone.)

ROSLYN

I was born with a tongue in my mouth same as you I haven't been like this I haven't been like this since I haven't been like this since I've never been like this. This I what was shown to me the day I was born it was me in wax can you imagine. All alone like that but all wax all the same and they said when I got older I would get smaller because I am just like the moon the moon that goddam moon. And I kept thinking with these odds I will be so lucky if I live just long enough to disappear altogether but I was not so lucky.

(Scene: ROMEO and ROSLYN.)

ROMEO

I don't know why you're so worried, you're a lot of people.

ROSLYN

That's the sweetest thing anyone's ever said to me.

ROMEO

This is all in my head, but you, you for sure are in my head, you were in my head for a long, long time.

ROSLYN

I don't think I ever stopped dreaming about you.

ROMEO

We shouldn't say things like that, it could change everything.

ROSLYN

Oh, it wouldn't change a thing. You'll never forget me.

ROMEO

That's sweet.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

ROSLYN

It's really not, it's not sweet at all.

INTERVIEW: ROSLYN & ROMEO (note: these interviews are random, between the performers, recorded on video and reproduced during the performance. I do not include these here, the originals were personal and intimate, and subsequent productions should include the same.)

(Scene: SUSAN alone.)

SUSAN

On the night before everything I ever wanted happened, I was buried, buried to my self all the way up to the top or the bottom of my head. I was buried in charcoal and honey I buried myself because nothing can stand still for that long. The three shadow women who know my secret name, they gave me all the proper things to burn, in the correct order, in order to bring things back to life, it's very specific, they're very specific, and told me the correct order, and I did exactly as I was told only time does not always go forward sometimes it just freezes suddenly, and it seems like maybe the spell didn't work, but, no, you have to wait, you have to wait and then you have to keep waiting, and I know, I know it will unfreeze, eventually, because faith because I have faith even though sometimes it is all the strength in the world to not fall apart in a thousand pieces, and cover a thousand innocent children with charcoal and honey, they say, they say the innocent children say, 'it's the same smell, being born the first time and the smell of death, it's the same.' Hahaha you know they're wrong. I was one of those ones who are born to die, and I was one of those ones who learned how to make things grow. And I know there's a difference.

(Scene: NURSE & SUSAN.)

NURSE

And what I miss what I miss miss miss the most what I miss.

SUSAN

What do you miss?

NURSE

That night. That one night. You were just a baby and you didn't want anything in the world except me. What do you most miss.

SUSAN

Everything. All of it. I missed all of it.

NURSE

That's true.

SUSAN

All of it.

NURSE

That's grief, that's the worst grief, I can't imagine.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SUSAN

I just started remembering something.

NURSE

You left too soon to really remember anything, you can't really trust your memories.

SUSAN

I remember you.

NURSE

Ok, that you can trust.

SUSAN

You.

NURSE

Yes.

SUSAN

You, and you, and you again, you will hold me again and rock me to sleep again.

NURSE

Yes, I will.

INTERVIEW: NURSE & SUSAN

(Scene: JULIET & ROMEO.)

JULIET

Tell me that thing again.

ROMEO

Which one?

JULIET

The first one. The first thing you ever said, before the dirt, before the worms, that one.

ROMEO

I can't remember anything.

JULIET

No one ever talked to me like that. I mean no one. No one talks like that ever.

ROMEO

I can't remember for sure, but I think it was in my head.

JULIET

This wasn't in your head, none of this was in your head.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

ROMEO

You don't know.

JULIET

I do, I do know. And you do remember, you just forgot that you remember, we lost something back there and it made you forget.

ROMEO

I really don't remember.

JULIET

Try.

ROMEO

I can't.

JULIET

Make something up.

(Pause.)

ROMEO

If I could remember, I might remember to tell you about how you turned me inside out, and there was one day, one day, the day I saw you, and I've never been the same.

JULIET

No one remembers how to talk like that because no one could ever talk like that. Only you.

ROMEO

I remembered something, just now, but it's a bird.

JULIET

It flies away.

ROMEO

Just like a bird.

JULIET

You're a bird.

ROMEO

You're a bird.

JULIET

We're just angels who can't remember how we got here.

INTERVIEW: JULIET & ROMEO

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(Scene: MERCUTIO alone.)

MERCUTIO

Tonight I'm teaching myself how to unwrap you, and how to make a road turn inside out. I saw how you turned out after the worms had their way with you, and no one missed you more than I did. Your smooth skin is now curling and your perfect fingers are curling, and the way I remember you is curling. If you remember what it was like to own this dark street corner, this place where everyone who's put here for a reason forgets the reason, then you'll remember who we decided we would be after all those things get left behind. I'm going to forget, I'm unwrapping you to forget how you used to look at me, and we might meet somewhere where we are only shadows of who we were, and after a dozen drunk conversations and a dozen more drinks, you could even start to remember how we were rough with love, but love was so much rougher with us.

(Scene: NURSE alone.)

NURSE

Remember. This is a love story. These are the cracks in the love story, where we slipped through, love slips in through the cracks, and when it starts to freeze, the moment it starts to freeze, we have a solid potion, a solid frozen potion that is more powerful than anything time has to teach us. And we can grow, what we can grow here, will start to appear through the cracks in the surface, and everything will be overgrown long after we've been gone, long after you don't remember the first thing about us, but we'll remember you.

(Scene: JULIET alone.)

JULIET

What no one knows except we suspect, we all suspect, what no one knows but everyone suspects, this suspicion, let me confirm this suspicion. Trying to get me, trying to get my tongue, firm, in the center of these, these thoughts, get my tongue firm in the center so I can untie them like a stem of a pomegranate. I think I mean cherry. Hah. I uh. Hah. Catch my breath. What no one knows but everyone suspects is that every lover who loses their life eventually becomes what I become. I can't tell you what that is. It's a secret. Hah. I uh. This keeps breaking me open, it keeps breaking me, it opens me like a secret with the tongue, it opens me like I might be a pomegranate I think I mean cherry I think I mean poem I think I no. No. I mean boat. I am opened. This, what happens to me, over and over, I died, what happens to me, opens me, like a boat, like a boat in the middle of a lake in the middle of a storm. His tongue, wraps, wraps, wrap wrapping at my stem and untying me from the inside and unlocking me until I am torn, like a boat in a storm. Hah. His lips, loose, his loose lips sink me like a ship, and I go down, very, quickly, down, and so much further than I thought. I go down so much further than I would have ever thought.

(Scene: NURSE & SUSAN.)

NURSE

You have to calm down, you have to sleep.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SUSAN

I'm not wrapped enough.

NURSE

I'm wrapping you. You always needed to be held a little tighter than the others. That's how it is when you leave too soon. But it's not any better, it wouldn't be better if you had lived. It doesn't get any better. For me, it wasn't better.

SUSAN

At least you know what it's like to be inside and outside yourself, I just know the inside.

NURSE

You don't want to have to go through that, the outside of yourself. Once you go outside of yourself, outside of that soft white light, the world is connected to your nerve endings and you see that eye of god and get destroyed and reconstructed cyclically, until you start to think it's all coming from you, the creation and the destruction are all from you.

SUSAN

Please cover my hair I want to protect it.

NURSE

The ones who die and don't come back, they're the lucky ones, the ones who make things grow, they're the lucky ones, they just make things grow, they don't need to know the secret.

SUSAN

And make my fingers tight, wrap them tightly together I don't want anyone to slip through.

NURSE

You're a charm.

SUSAN

And cover my feet with leather so I can walk on water and fire. You mean charming.

NURSE

I really mean charm.

SUSAN

Charms can't control themselves.

NURSE

Yes. But I'll keep you tied to my neck, you won't ever be exposed, and you'll never be lost.

SUSAN

I want to be lost. That's what I want. I want to be vomited into the world so I can get lost in it. Like all the famous lovers. Ask if I can be taller. Or ask if they

Appendix E: The Play Texts

have shoes that will make me taller. Do they have mint? Ask if they have mint. If you keep pinching me, I'm going to start poking you. See? See? Are you dreaming?

NURSE

I wish you would sleep, you never sleep, not long enough, but you need to sleep long enough to dream, because when you dream, you make things grow.

SUSAN

I'm going to untangle myself from your neck when you sleep and when you wake up I'm so far away and you won't find me for years. But you'll hear, eventually, you'll see or you'll hear and then at that moment you will find out the story about how I did something wonderful. And everyone for miles in every direction will know what I did.

NURSE

You don't have to get born in order to make marks on the dirt.

SUSAN

But you do. You have to get born, all the way, to make marks.

NURSE

Then you don't know why I stopped sleeping the day after you died.

INTERVIEW: ROSLYN & JULIET

(Scene: ROSLYN and JULIET.)

ROSLYN

Thank you for meeting me here.

JULIET

Of course, it's my pleasure, I really don't trust you, though, I like the way you smile, you remind me of someone, but I don't trust you at all.

ROSLYN

You think I'm going to try to steal him from you?

JULIET

I'm not so sure.

ROSLYN

I'm not like any of those. I'm not trying to be a lover that history can remember, it's already had its way with me, and I learned to love this. I wouldn't want that, what you have, I wouldn't want what I have, but you, even less.

JULIET

Don't tell him you don't want him, he would like that more than anyone including me could admit. Hah. You know. How men are. I think I might mean us, we, how we are, you, I mean, we. Hah. We know how we are.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

ROSLYN

We like to leave marks, especially in places where we're not wanted.

JULIET

Yes. That's true. But not for me. I mean, not anymore. I don't want to leave any more marks. I'd like to erase a lot of things, to be honest.

ROSLYN

Have you forgotten something?

JULIET

What do you mean?

ROSLYN

I can just tell things. You left something behind.

JULIET

Like what?

ROSLYN

Like a thought, a want, an unfinished gesture, a fairy lock.

JULIET

I'm sure I left something but I don't remember what it was.

ROSLYN

Have you ever left your breath on a mirror?

JULIET

It's been too long, I don't remember. Why?

ROSLYN

Because I don't think I ever left a mark anywhere.

JULIET

Why do you want to leave a mark?

ROSLYN

When you're hunting in the forest, you always leave marks. On the ground, on a tree, on the leaves where the next hunter will come running. You always leave marks.

JULIET

Why is that, do you think?

ROSLYN

So the next one knows we were here, what we saw, so we don't keep falling into the same traps over and over again, get eaten by the same predators again and again.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

JULIET

That's it?

ROSLYN

No. It's more. And because we like to see traces of ourselves, we like to see that we left something behind, and if we can leave a trace of ourselves on something, then we might not ever have to die.

JULIET

Then you know why lovers bite.

(Scene: SUSAN alone.)

SUSAN

When it hits me, when it comes in any of its forms, the sad cat on the doorstep who asks me if I've forgotten about him, or the warrior on the gold chariot who comes to ride me like a horse when I already have a fever, when it hits me, I play words in my head like they were an instrument to keep sickness outside the window, and the order doesn't matter, but the rhythm makes all the difference in the world. I know this is not for me. I know I was not meant for this. I know these bones weren't born to hold anything. But there's one day. You have this one day. You're very small, you can't even speak, and you're being carried, and you are being introduced to people, and there's one person, you see one person, it doesn't matter how old you are, you remember. This one, I've seen this one before. Last time, the last time I was here, I know this one from the last time. And that's when you fall. Into the world. One day, if you get to live it, you'll fall in love with this person and this person will fall in love with you again, and they'll say the story starts there, but it doesn't, it starts much earlier, from before, when you were small, it starts there, and if it doesn't get interrupted, then you'll get to walk in that story, unless you get interrupted. Then, you might go on, to the next thing, the next place, remembering something about something being interrupted, and it might start to haunt you, and you might decide to forget about it, or you might decide you can't. You might decide you'll haunt them the way they're haunting you. And that's how you sleep, that's what you do when you're letting the shell of your body get rocked to sleep, at the end of the day, when the gust blows your last regret through your window into your lap while you lie sleeping, and you think, you might be able to hear me, and when you want me enough, I'm climbing through your window, back to life, with cold metal in my hands and a dark stone where my heart once lived, when it wanted, once, when it wanted, and that. Is how. You bring the dead back to life.

INTERVIEW: MERCUTIO & ROSLYN

(Scene: MERCUTIO & ROSLYN.)

MERCUTIO

You might be the one I was looking for.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

ROSLYN

I am.

MERCUTIO

Is this seat, is this open? Can I sit here?

ROSLYN

It's a bed. It's my bed. This seat is my bed.

MERCUTIO

You don't get out of bed very much.

ROSLYN

Not if I can help it.

MERCUTIO

My kinda girl.

(Pause.)

ROSLYN

I like you. You're a mirror, just like me.

MERCUTIO

I'm a mirror.

ROSLYN

We're all mirrors, but some of us are better at it than others. And I see something in you.

MERCUTIO

I'd like to hear it. I'd like to know what someone sees in me, because I don't remember what it's like to be recognized, even if it's wrong.

ROSLYN

I find it hard to believe that no one sees anything in you.

MERCUTIO

You say nice things.

ROSLYN

Put this in your mouth.

MERCUTIO

What is it?

ROSLYN

It's a mirror.

MERCUTIO

And that works?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

ROSLYN

I think it would help.

(He puts the mirror in his mouth.
Pause.)

MERCUTIO

Once, if I remember well, once, I heard a secret, how not to move, I heard a secret, it wasn't meant for me, but I heard it, and I won't repeat it, not exactly, only partly, I leave the secret ingredient out. There's honey, and that, I can't tell it, there's that, and five drops of white wine, and something your mother wore. And words, there are always words, you have to repeat, and when you repeat the words, you are repeated, and when you repeat, when you repeat until you are no longer moving, only repeating, you are suddenly there, where they all once were, right before you, they are all with you, and suddenly you, like me, are not, you are there, and you are not, you are no longer.

ROSLYN

It sounds dirty.

MERCUTIO

You wouldn't even believe.

ROSLYN

I know a spell. I know a good one. It's the only one I ever learned, the only one I ever wanted to learn. How to become what someone wants.

MERCUTIO

Does it work?

ROSLYN

Not yet. But it will. I just need a friend. Someone who can help me. And you, you look bored.

INTERVIEW: ROSLYN & MERCUTIO

(Scene: JULIET alone.)

JULIET

To make things clear, I don't want to go back. This isn't about that. It has nothing to do with that, if this was that I'd be going about it very smartly, I would know exactly what to do. It's the same thing that you do to my body when you remember who I am to you, you get that look in your eye and it's over for me, it's just like that. The way to make yourself go back, you take that thought, what you want to do to the body of the one you love, and you make the opening into the world into the body of your lover. And then nine months later you get born there. It might be six months. Here, it might be six months. But this is not that. This is not going back as a ghost, not born, not haunting, going back to get something that was lost. A letter, a mark, a phrase, a word entwined in a lock of hair. Some mark that someone made in the dirt over you. And to bring them back to you through the power of the letter.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(Scene: ROSLYN & ROMEO.)

ROSLYN

There. That thing. That thing that you are. I want to be that.

ROMEO

In love?

ROSLYN

Sure. That.

ROMEO

You want to be in love.

ROSLYN

Is that the word for it, for what you are?

ROMEO

Yes. Sure. I think so. I mean yes it is.

ROSLYN

When you wake up, you are...

ROMEO

In love.

ROSLYN

And when you sleep, you call that...

ROMEO

In love.

ROSLYN

Is that the only word?

ROMEO

For what I am?

ROSLYN

Yes.

ROMEO

Yes. Well, no. Not the only. The best.

ROSLYN

Aha. The best. What else.

ROMEO

Um. I wake up. I look at the Moon. It's right there. It's always right there. Hah. Alive. I am alive. And in love. I look at the Moon. She whispers to me and tells me things. I am awake, alive, and in love. That's all I remember.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

ROSLYN

That's it.

ROMEO

What?

ROSLYN

Alive. That's the word. I want that. What you are, to live inside hands that can touch the world that you see, I want that more than anything in the world.

ROMEO

You know I tried to help you.

ROSLYN

Stupid boy, you know I was asleep.

(She puts a mirror under his tongue.)

INTERVIEW: JULIET & MERCUTIO

(Scene: JULIET & MERCUTIO.)

JULIET

Will you tie this, back here?

MERCUTIO

It's knotty.

JULIET

So are you.

MERCUTIO

I don't know why you're doing this.

JULIET

You'd do the same.

MERCUTIO

Probably. Or maybe. I don't know. I really don't know what you're doing.

JULIET

Going back. Not like a ghost, but not alive back, not born back.

MERCUTIO

You think you can haunt me even more than you already have?

JULIET

I haunt you?

MERCUTIO

This is probably all just in my head.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

JULIET

You remind me of him sometimes.

MERCUTIO

Thank you. I don't know what you mean, but thank you. I like it that I remind you, because that means you can see me, and that means I'm not as invisible as I thought.

JULIET

I'd love to know what that's like. To be invisible.

MERCUTIO

You wouldn't like it.

JULIET

I bet I would.

MERCUTIO

So you can haunt without being noticed.

JULIET

Not to haunt. I'm not looking to be seen, but not to haunt.

MERCUTIO

Try. When you're up there. Try to be seen. Just once. Let one little girl, one little boy, see you, and sharpen your finger in her eye. His eye. Either way. It's not so important which.

JULIET

That's what you would do.

MERCUTIO

It is.

JULIET

You're not me.

MERCUTIO

And you still haven't told me what you're doing.

JULIET

Going back, I'm going back to the same place I left.

MERCUTIO

Like a lonely ghost.

JULIET

No. Like a lover who has been too hot for too many nights in a row, until my head turned clear, and I remember something, a letter, something he wrote me, that I never got to read, I'm looking for the letter, to bring him back to me.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

MERCUTIO

He's sleeping right there.

JULIET

That's not him. He's lost. He got lost back there, his soul tied up in a lock of hair.

INTERVIEW: R&J

(Scene: ROSLYN alone.)

ROSLYN

Always always always running, somewhere from the back of the head toward the front of the head, the hundred people I never got to be, I would just try one, if I could have just one, a life without a mirror, to live inside a body where there was no mirror outside the body to tell the body the story of itself, to write on its vital tissue and tell it the story it would have to live. Maybe there would be love, or maybe there would be a convent or maybe it would be a morning, the life that is like a morning where you are in front of the sky and there are no words or no words that have to matter because nothing we say to each other would feel the pressure to become matter, just like that like simple like that. Maybe it would be something else entirely, a life without a map, without any sense of direction. There are always a hundred people in my head, the ones I wanted to become, but it was never my destiny. My death is as unmarked as my life, no one remembers how I got here, and no one remembers how I left. If I sink, if the river would have me, pockets full of stones. Heart filled with glass. If I sink, then only the dead ones would know me, because of the marks I would write on the bottom of the river. And those marks would be your secrets, the ones you wanted to know, the obese nonsense that spells your life. This is what you are supposed to say to make that one disappear, this is what you say to make that one stay, and this is the charm, this stone in my pocket, works like a charm to make all your dead ones spring back to life, fall forward into the living river of the waking world.

(Scene: ROMEO & JULIET.)

ROMEO

You want me to come back?

JULIET

You're right here, I want you to remember you're right here.

ROMEO

I don't want to remember anything, there were too many masks and shadows and no one was who they pretended to be, and I don't need to know any more to get through the day.

JULIET

Then you remember it wrong.

ROMEO

It's all in my head.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

JULIET

What you remember is in your head, and it's wrong.

ROMEO

You think you can help me.

JULIET

I help lots of people, it's not as hard as you think.

ROMEO

I want you to help me count the freckles on my leg, and work your way up.

JULIET

You're a little drunk.

ROMEO

I know what I'm saying. I'm well aware of what we're talking about. And I don't want you to get me confused with someone you think is me.

JULIET

Does that happen with you all the time?

ROMEO

Even more often than all the time. It recurs as much as tragic love stories.

JULIET

And what's your favorite tragic love story.

ROMEO

Duh. The one where they die in bed.

JULIET

Right.

ROMEO

They're in bed together doing what they do best and that's when they die.

JULIET

Of course.

ROMEO

Isn't that what everybody wants?

JULIET

I like the one where they get to be forgotten.

ROMEO

Does that ever happen?

JULIET

I can't imagine what that would feel like. To be completely forgotten.

INTERVIEW: JULIET & ROMEO

(Scene: MERCUTIO alone. He's watching the video of himself doing the Mab speech.)

MERCUTIO

Nothing more than a slippery liquid that could only reflect, after all, reflecting from the very start and never really making anything original out of nothing. Coming from nothing into an assemblage of organs and bad decisions, and going out again, back into nothing, the only advantage the dead have over the living is the experience of disintegration, we're still water, and nothing more, and suddenly something reminds me that I reflect more peculiarly now than I did before. And underneath all of the clothes and the flesh and the bone, that itch, the one I don't scratch any longer, that itch to be something more than this, something more than what this is at this very moment in this particular time. And it's inside out, and it's more comfortable there than anywhere else, because it's unmistakably unfixable, and we are no longer who we once were, and this much further or closer to what we always wanted to be. Closer or further, it doesn't matter which, because the only thing I ever cared about is that this keeps moving, in any direction. I saw you and then I knew you and when you woke up that thing, that itch that's in the marrow of the marrow, I knew two things. I would love you farther than anyone could ever love anyone. And that this, all of this, in life and in death, is a mistake. And the game is fixed, and we don't stand a chance. But, when I am itching, I am coming back to life, and this bloody and battered body starts to glow from the inside out, this mouth swallows you whole as if you were a liquid medicine, and this heart starts to speak and repeat everything that put you under for the very first time, that day before our feet turned from liquid to vapor, and the very surface of the earth were responsible for erasing us. And this, "This is that very Mab That plats the manes of horses in the night, And bakes the elflocks in foul sluttish hairs, Which once untangled, much misfortune bodes..."

INTERVIEW: MERCUTIO ALONE (outtakes from Mab)

(Scene: SUSAN & NURSE.)

SUSAN

You could tell me a story, a story might help.

NURSE

Stories are what the dead tell to the living. Just in case anyone's still listening. It wouldn't help you.

SUSAN

What is it like to be loved.

NURSE

I can't remember.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SUSAN

What are the rules. Your hands on someone's back, do you remember that?

NURSE

No.

SUSAN

How tight.

NURSE

How tight what.

SUSAN

How tight do you hold.

NURSE

I don't remember.

SUSAN

I wouldn't want to hurt anyone. But I don't think they'd tell me. It would be uncomfortable. I would imagine. When you love someone for the first time and they love you back for the first time, and there are all of these lifetimes of unmade gestures inside you, and you want to make all the gestures, but you can't, because there isn't enough time, so you just want one gesture to stand for the whole, for all of the everything that you ever wanted, and you're making that gesture, the one, the one that stands in the place of everything else, and that would already be difficult enough, because you need to give it the proper force so that it has the proper effect, and the other person is doing that same thing at the same time, and even if you're perfect for each other, I would imagine it wouldn't always work out so that your gesture and their gesture would match up perfectly. Arms would get crossed somewhere and someone would have to move their head in a direction that they hadn't planned on, and I'm just guessing that at that point, neither one of you is really going to want to be very critical, because that might make the other person stop and then what, then you have to go home, you have to go home and it might be another seventeen lifetimes before this comes up again, and that's too long, no one could wait that long, anyone who waits that long would be terrified out of their mind to think this would keep happening like this again and over again and it would be unbearable, and so. I don't think I would be critical and they wouldn't be critical at all either, because we wouldn't want this to end. Not after all of these lifetimes of waiting to meet each other. We don't want it to stop before it starts. And what if I crush too hard? What if I'm crushing too hard? They wouldn't say a word, and I might be slowly crushing them to death. Can you love someone so much that you crush them to death?

NURSE

I think that's how most people love, at least that's how it used to be. When the world was green in the spring and orange in the fall, etc. etc.

SUSAN

Do you remember holding me?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

NURSE

That's all I remember.

SUSAN

How tight.

NURSE

Tighter than you could imagine.

SUSAN

I held you like that.

NURSE

You didn't worry about hurting me.

SUSAN

I was already dead.

INTERVIEW: SUSAN & NURSE

INTERVIEW: MERCUTIO & ROMEO

(Scene: MERCUTIO and ROMEO.)

ROMEO

I think I'm confused with someone else.

MERCUTIO

I'm sure you are.

ROMEO

I keep remembering things, but I'm pretty sure they're all in my head.

MERCUTIO

I'm sure that's right.

ROMEO

Something, something happened, something terrible happened, hah. I was, something, torn up and torn away, and put back together. Does that ever happen to you?

MERCUTIO

I can't even keep count.

ROMEO

You're the only one I trust, so it's kind of important that you tell me the truth here.

MERCUTIO

I'll never lie to you.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

ROMEO

Do you remember when we used to own these streets?

MERCUTIO

I do.

ROMEO

Sometimes I think that's the only real thing that ever happened.

MERCUTIO

It is.

(MERCUTIO wraps ROMEO.)

(Scene: SUSAN alone.)

SUSAN

I'm not too old, I'm not old at all, I never got to be old, I never got to be young, but I'm old enough, or here, I've been, I've been here for long enough, to know better, I know better. What I said, what I once said: I'm coming back. I'm going, it's not of my own free will, I'm going, I'm not going to leave without leaving marks, I'm going, I'm not leaving without making it impossible for the living, the ones who let me go, the ones who left me to let me go to lessen me, I'm going, but I'm coming back. There is no greater love in this world than the love for the ones who get to walk in this world, haha, the secret, that's it, that's the secret, the only one worth knowing, and if I got to taste that, if I had the chance to taste that, just for once, just for one small tiny once, I would go and I would never come back. But. I am. Coming. Back. On one night you will know what it means to have been born, and to have been dead for too long, and on one night your whole tongue will turn your own mouth inside out and everything after that night will be an entirely different story for you, and it will be the one you've been afraid you might have to live one day, and one day comes, one day comes too soon, this is one day.

(Scene: ROSLYN alone.)

ROSLYN

There was that time, you were alone, not entirely, it was mostly alone, there's someone else in the room with you. Someone in a black coat, they might be sleeping they might be praying, you don't know. You're too young. You make a line in the dirt at your feet, and something catches you there. You're caught, you've caught yourself, and you go into the lines at your feet, and you draw yourself a world. This is a drawing of you, and you're holding the hand of someone who gave you life and you draw yourself smiling, a wild and dangerous smile, and you know this is true. This is what you are, this is exactly what you are. You're just little, you're little and you're making drawings of yourself that make sense to you, and you see what you made, and something inside of you says, 'I want this, this is what I want to be.' And you draw a circle around yourself, because you understand even then that this needs protecting, it needs to be kept safe, because you know already how this is going to work,

Appendix E: The Play Texts

that this will be the first time maybe and the last time probably that you recognize your image in something outside of yourself.

(Scene: ROMEO & JULIET.)

ROMEO

You're going.

JULIET

I'm going.

ROMEO

I see.

JULIET

You'll miss me?

ROMEO

I don't know, this is all in my head.

JULIET

It's really not.

ROMEO

This is complicated.

JULIET

We're complicated.

ROMEO

How do you like being an icon of lost love.

JULIET

I love it. How about you?

ROMEO

The best part is that, I don't remember. The worst part, um. This is complicated.

JULIET

We're complicated.

ROMEO

I think, I think I remember, there was someone before you. You weren't the first.

JULIET

Oh, but I was the best, don't forget that I was the best.

ROMEO

I did forget. But it doesn't matter, because I know I'm not who I thought I was, so I'm just trying. This is hard to explain.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

JULIET

Because it's complicated.

ROMEO

Because it's complicated. I don't have a mirror in my head, not like some of the others do, something that tells me when I'm right. Like who I'm supposed to be. Something that reflects right when I'm who I'm supposed to be. Like a compass.

JULIET

You need a mirror or a compass? I can get you a mirror or a compass. I mean, I know people who can get things.

ROMEO

Everyone thinks they know who they're supposed to be, and everyone's faking it. Anyone with a spark of a spark left can be compared to a god or an angel. Because there's nothing in place, those rough ones who used to live in order to learn how to see in the dark, the ones with real meat on their bones, the ones who got struck suddenly, over and over, and learned how to strike back.

JULIET

That was you, that's who you are.

ROMEO

It's not the world we left, not at all.

JULIET

It is. You're just not paying attention to the right things.

ROMEO

I don't know where I'm supposed to be looking.

JULIET

Nothing is very different, nothing is different at all.

ROMEO

There's no more blood in me.

JULIET

What if. I told you. I know how to bring it back.

(Pause.)

But you wouldn't see me for a long long time. Would you wait for me. To bring you. Back to me. To you.

ROMEO

I don't think you'll find it, because I don't even think it was ever there. Our movie never did get made, not in the right way, it was always too fresh, new costumes, things we never wore, or too stale, too careful to make sure you could hear all of our syllables, when the best things we ever said were never in words, but only in murmurs, or the saturation is off, and you can't even see the sweat and the salt on our skin. We need versions of ourselves who are

Appendix E: The Play Texts

fearless, reckless, and more than just a little suicidal. Ones who can burn themselves completely, leaving no trace.

JULIET

You don't know, because your mother never told you, you can burn the dead to ash, but one drop of ash on the tongue, and there comes a haunting that you can't imagine. I'm going. I'm going to find you. If I don't come back, it's only because you wouldn't come back. Remember me.

(She doesn't go. She lies on the ground, is wrapped in white cloth blood coming from her heart and mouth.)

INTERVIEW: JULIET & ROMEO

(Scene: ROSLYN alone.)

ROSLYN

Like the old gods, the ones who go away when no one remembers their names any more, I go. I don't go where someone might remember me, I go to where I might be left forgotten. I want to make myself up, according to my own version. I was Mexico during its best revolution, and I stayed hidden until I was recognized by Diego Rivera, who ate me when no one was looking, and no one noticed until I painted myself from the inside of his belly. I was Germany twenty years before the Second World War, improperly burned, improperly buried, a tattoo of numbers that keep disappearing with every new genocide. I came here, where no one remembers that the bones in the ground are still speaking through the bones of the living. That's wrong, wait, I'm wrong about that. There are those who remember, but they keep drowning in shallow rivers between one place that doesn't really exist and another. The rivers exist. The drowning exists. I came here to be forgotten. It was the next place to be forgotten. I came to be forgotten. And everybody wants me. Because I might be that, I might be the answer to that unbearable pain, the pain of that aggression that doesn't know where it comes from. I might be the answer to that pain that keeps you up because your comfortable home is built on the bones of the locals. I'm the thing that makes you forget that you're not from here, or you don't fit in there, and no one really understands you. I did not sink my leg bones into the ground, and I still haven't been planted, so I'm not staying. Apparently. But while I'm here. I might be that one, the one smoking outside at the table on the sidewalk, who might turn around and recognize you, and forgive you for not having the nerve to live your real life inside your real bones. I might be that one, the one on the billboard, who looks like she forgives you, those things you did to make yourself forget, those things you did to get yourself off to sleep, those things you did that kill the people who want to love you, I'm the one who knows what you do, and finds it all very charming because it's what I would do if I were given the chance. I might be your lost lover, the one you could have had if you only knew the right words. I might be the one you loved before, before you met the love that killed you. You'll never know. I'll never let you know anything for certain. Until you forget me. And when you forget me, I'll make you twitch on a sleepless night, the itch on the back of your

Appendix E: The Play Texts

neck in a dusty room, the metal regret under your tongue when the sun comes up just a little too bright, the fire you forgot to put out, the lock you forgot to turn, the window you suddenly remember that you forgot to close when you're almost sleeping. I live inside that.

INTERVIEW: ROMEO (alone, simultaneous with below:)

(Scene: ROMEO alone.)

ROMEO

Not quite, almost, something like half, half of that, something like. Hah. Animal, something. This. You. You were, I didn't know you, nothing, no idea, there was this Roslyn and this was. Something happened, something, like, half animal. Like when a dog smells blood, something new. That's me on the first day, the day I met you, I've never been the same, I don't tell you that, I don't tell you anything until it's too late. I hope you find me, my animal parts, the ones that got left, the thing that happened to all of us, I hope you find them, those. Hah. Our parts, Bits of teeth and something you can use, how they, how we use these things here. You know what we do here. You know we know what to do when we get a piece of our old bones here. Like this was a bone that was in your back and this was a tooth, my tooth, how it was in your back, making bites, it was so short. That was so short. The first thing every dead one says, when they get here, that was so short. I didn't know it was going to be so short.

INTERVIEW: NURSE & SUSAN (talk about hahaha death hahaha)

(Scene: NURSE and SUSAN.)

NURSE

You should sleep.

SUSAN

No one should sleep any more.

NURSE

You're going to need to be quiet, you're going to need to be quiet for a long time.

SUSAN

They don't understand what they're missing when they sleep.

NURSE

You don't know what you're missing when you don't sleep.

SUSAN

Please don't do that to me again.

NURSE

It's not really up to you, when you're dreaming, you make things grow.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SUSAN

I don't like it, this wasn't anything I would have ever agreed to. I wouldn't have agreed to this. This isn't what I would do, if I had any choice, it isn't what I would choose.

(She's already sleeping.)

NURSE

Now you sleep. When you sleep, you're flying. Now you can sleep. When you're dreaming, the stone in your heart starts to beat like thunder, and your eyes turn young, like they were when you were born, you were born with a mirror to the sea inside your own head, you were born looking backwards into the sea, into the eyes of the dead. I would, if I had, hah. If I had the chance. I would have given everything I am, all that I have, my first and last breath, to see you running across the surface of the earth. I would have given anything to see you born into a body that was running, that could touch this ground and remember it, but you were born already inside of it, you were always inside the thing you wanted to touch, and it turns me inside out to see you like this. You touch this from the inside. You're already flying, you're a bird, a bird who thinks she's already broken, but she's already flying. You think you have nothing, that you left with nothing and came here with nothing, but you own these hours, the ones between midnight and four in the morning, you're the one who brings things back to life, who makes things grow and brings them back to life, you own the grave, and nothing can ever touch you there, nothing will ever touch you there.

(Scene: JULIET in a mirror.)

JULIET

I come to the place where the wolves had picked our bones clean some generations ago, and I sit on the edge between you and I, where we took our last breath. I don't have a mirror, I don't know if there's a trace anywhere, and I can't tell if I'm leaving tracks. The hardest thing for the dead, when you come back to the surface again, is that you notice that the world did not get darker, like you imagined it would have, but it's much much brighter, or worse, as bright as it was when you were there, only you didn't notice when you were there, because it's so hard to see beyond the limits of your own skull. We see the bones above our eyes, we see the hint of the nose in front of our own face, and we think it's dark because we're always seeing through our own bones. After awhile, I start to see other lovers from other centuries, and I can't tell if they're real or just ghosts, they don't recognize me, I don't know how they got here. And they are all thinking the same thing, that they want to have what we had, that they want to become immortal. And this happens, and it happens to me, for one hundred nights. And every time, I am thinking the same thing. The opposite. I want what they have. A night where you turn into each other, a night where all the lovers who ever were, pass through you, so they can have what you have, to taste that just once more, and once more is never enough, but always right, it's always right. I had that night, but I didn't get the morning, the next morning, the one that goes on forever, there's soft kisses and there might be food and then you talk and then it goes on and you decide that there's nothing more important than the two of you, nothing that has to happen that day

Appendix E: The Play Texts

except to have that day, and the morning goes on until it turns into another night with lovers from the past passing through your skin into the other skin, and then it's morning again. And you don't know where you end or begin, and you don't know where this is going, or how long it will go on, and you're mortal, you're mortal, you're absolutely mortal. And that's when a real life starts, the one that really happens to you, and no one else but you and the one you love knows what happens after that. Then. Then I remember, I'm looking for something here, I'm looking for a tooth, a bone, a piece of your clothes, and I'm looking for something you wrote to me, a letter. But there's no letter. I can't find a letter. It isn't there any more, or it never was, but I find this. This charm. It's wrapped in red cloth, in the shape of a heart, and it's tied with an elflock. You don't have to remember, it doesn't matter if you remember or not what an elflock is for, it really doesn't matter if you remember, and it might even be better if you don't remember any of the details of what we put into this. It's going to work either way, but if you aren't awake, then it works faster. I don't know why it happens like that. This charm, this is the one I used to recognize myself, is the one that tells me that who I was is who I am. This charm is that thing, that thing in me that gave birth to this love, that thing that can live inside any head of any adolescent that wondered what it would be like to love, that lives inside the head of anyone who ever suspected that love was more than death, love is the thing that always escapes, is the thing that sees there is no escape, is the tremble that makes you want to run, that same tremble that makes you want to stay, for even the smallest of reasons, a memory of a short conversation, an almost kiss that gave birth to a whole life, a little corner of the mouth turned up in a smile, or a lock of hair.

(Scene: SUSAN alone.)

SUSAN

Here, where the muses come, they come with blood fresh on their boots, and their eyes are looking through you, and you think they know you, you think they remember you, but what they remember is the taste of the meat in your throat, the meat between the bones in your throat, and they will shake you until there is nothing more in you that is shaking. I'm throwing all the stones into the river, the ones that were made for charms that would never work, because my hands don't speak to the world the way I want them to, living or dead, I can't make my hands do what I want them to. So I dream, and when I dream, I make things grow, and when I dream, things come back to life. I keep telling them, I'm too young to be a goddess, I'm not ready for this, and they keep pushing me to try, and they promise me that if I keep trying, it will be enough to put me back together, and then, one day, I get to come back. I get to be the thing that grows, the thing that sets foot on the earth, and stays, the thing that knows by touching, from the inside, to the outside. This was always about that. The day I get to come back. Because I'm coming back. And once I live in a body again, no one will be able to hold back when my hands are wrapped around that real face, the one I know from before, the face I know from before, the one I know but forgot. And if it means I have to forget everything in order to remember everything, then let me forget, the ones who forget are the ones who get born.

(SUSAN makes herself the object, the thing that gets brought back to life.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(Scene: MERCUTIO alone.)

MERCUTIO

You were lightning, running through my veins, the kind of fire that makes these ridiculous things lose their bite. You were the only one besides me who understood right out of the womb that this thing was fixed, who knew that the odds were against us, there was no way we would win, except we could decide that we wouldn't play at all. And there weren't enough nights where I felt like we'd conquered them, that their misplaced aggression wasn't strong any more, and couldn't run the world. But there are always more terrified men, afraid of their own shadows, and they're always well armed, and they always have us in their peripheral vision. So I constructed a version of you, one that couldn't be eroded by rough love against rough skin, and when you were sleeping, I cut your hair and nails to make a body that could live through all of this, but I couldn't find the thing that could stand in the place of your heart, and that's where you were always more vulnerable than anyone I've ever known. But I know things. I learned them from your mother. And I remember the spell to make a stone start to beat again. You need to have two things, two different kinds of objects, one of them is to reflect, and one of them is to absorb, and you've known me for a long time, you know I'm shiny on the surface, but if you try to put your finger on me, I move apart, like my atoms aren't even really touching each other. And that I'm really just water. Underneath this, the thing under the skin, inside the bone, before the bone, before and after the body, I'm water, I'm just water, and I absorb everything, and if I'm standing with you, then nothing can ever touch you, I take all the hits for you, because I know more than anyone what it's like to have this sweet world turn bitter, and it never turns back, and I won't let them do to you what they did to me.

(Scene: NURSE alone.)

NURSE

Remember: This is a love story. It's not the one I thought it was, not the one it was supposed to be, everything escaped, and everything got mistaken. I'm not from here, I'm from a different time, when this was not by accident. There were stars and then there were kingdoms and then there was us, and all of us reflected each other, and it was up to us to decide how to best reflect those things that we were taught to admire. This is not that. This is when everything is falling forward in time, by accident, everything is an accident or a tragedy or a catastrophe, one mistake follows another, and nothing is where it's supposed to be. No one believes any more that anyone in power has our best interests in mind, and we can't even know our own heads from the inside, and even the birds know more about us than we do. I wanted to keep this safe, I wanted this to be safe for you, so you could make things grow. You were put here, you were selected, to bring things back to life, nothing could make a parent more proud. On one day, on one singular day, you figured out that you could be the object that came back to life, that your spells work best on your own self. And that was the same day you started to plan your own escape. I must have known that you would go, because it was already written in the stars, and it was written in your own handwriting, and that's the day that your small hands, the ones I kissed every night, that was the day that those hands became larger than mine.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(Scene: ROSLYN alone.)

ROSLYN

I'm taking all my mirrors back. I don't come back, I won't come back, I've been copied and duplicated and repeated over and over, and every time there's another flood, there are a thousand more of me. I don't need to see this keep repeating, I don't get anything from watching myself get repeated, and I can't stop being resurrected. A thousand of me just set foot in one of those five cities in the world, where you might have a chance at being the one that everyone wants and no one ever gets to have. We all escape, all of my versions escape, through those cracks where things come to life, we escape through those very same cracks, and nothing is anything more than just a little bit unfrozen. I'm that promise that it might happen for you this time, that the thing you always wanted might crawl into your lap, and that your biggest dream will come true without the consent of another complicated person. I'm the gaze that makes older men feel like they might not be so old after all, and I'm the same gaze that makes young women feel like their worries will go away if they're wanted, just a little bit wanted, I'm the impossible itch, the water in the grave, and the mirror under your tongue, and I never sleep.

(Scene: JULIET and ROMEO.)

JULIET

Hi.

ROMEO

Hi.

JULIET

You're back.

ROMEO

You came back.

JULIET

I have dirt all over me.

ROMEO

Just like old times.

JULIET

Haha, very cute. Look at me. I have dirt all over me.

ROMEO

You got buried, you look like you got buried.

JULIET

Buried and planted.

INTERVIEW: JULIET & ROMEO (talk about how they met)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(Scene: ALL.)

Am I going back?	SUSAN
Yes.	ALL OTHERS (AO)
Am I going back?	SUSAN
Yes.	AO
Am I going back?	SUSAN
Yes.	AO
Am I going back?	SUSAN
Yes.	AO
All the way back?	SUSAN
All the way back.	AO
	End of play

Appendix E: The Play Texts

3. endofplay MOTS3

end of play/7 (part one)

(Scene: It's one of those spectacularly stormy nights, dark, too, yes that, dark and stormy is exactly where this all starts.)

(Note: I don't really know where this is going.)

DOG (not yet a DOG):

This is the story of a dog.

SHE:

No, it's not.

(And so sorry for that interruption, that's not how it starts, it starts here, with a song.)

SHE:

Magical princess.
How does she do it?
Nobody knows.

(That's not quite the beginning yet, it really starts right here. The sky cracks open, the supermoon starts getting close, and the lovers in their cars are parked at the edges of the city, watching the moon get close, but then it gets closer, and it gets even closer than that, and before they can do anything about it, the lovers are crushed by the weight of the moon, and they get to die the way all lovers want to die, under the weight of the moon. Tragic and historical at once. It's fantastic.)

SHE:

This is what happened when I was just small, when the moon was shaped like a cow, and everyone used to call it moo.

HE (suddenly, as if for the very first time, is her favorite psychiatrist):

Mm, hm, that's interesting in a very disturbed kind of way, in a way that makes me think you are disturbed, just enough to make me fall in love with you.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SHE:

And you fall in love with all of your patients, don't you, doctor? You pull them all in your little mental rickshaw, you climb up their hair in the middle of the night, and you meet your friends in a bar every day and you talk about her, and you laugh, and you all laugh, and you're all such good friends, and you laugh.

HE:

For a time, yes, oh, yes, there always comes a time, and it only lasts for a time.

SHE:

How long?

HE:

Ten days and 200 nights.

SHE:

Oh, that's too long, I don't have that kind of time.

HE:

Who does? I know, I know, sweet child, and that's why life is so unbearable for people who are me.

(And suddenly, without warning, he turns into the thing he is afraid of, all fear and insecurity, and you know we're all like that, sometimes, but here it's much worse, because he is convinced that it only happens to him.)

HE:

I don't want to go on about it too much, I think I look young, but sometimes my own skin frightens me, when it is scrunched up.

SHE:

When is it scrunched up, exactly? I need you to be more specific or the treatment is just not going to work.

HE:

I am usually scrunched up most drastically when I am pulling at the skin of my stomach over the ridges of my entirely fashionable women's jeans. Don't they make me look young?

SHE:

I wouldn't say anything to upset you, because I know how you get when you're upset, so I'll just say you look tall, you often look very tall.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

But I'm not that tall. It's true, though, that I've almost always dated women who are shorter than me.

SHE:

Yes? Yes? Do go on.

HE:

I once dated someone who was 23 years shorter than me.

SHE:

Aha.

HE:

I mean inches. I really meant to say inches.

SHE:

Perhaps you did, and perhaps you don't realize just how terribly short that is.

HE:

It was impossible.

(And he is suddenly so lost, utterly lost, a sailor lost at sea, except without any idea how to tie a knot on a boat, this is so perilous, who knew this was going to be such a perilous sea play? And because he is lost, SHE takes the opportunity to tell him something true, because she knows he is too lost to listen, lost like one of those sailors who don't listen because their true love is the sea.)

SHE

I remember very well who I was supposed to be, I remember the moment I was no longer who I was supposed to be, I was the song that my blood makes in my head when I am underwater, and I would stay underwater if I could breathe there, but the thing that always happens, I can't breathe, I come up for air, and someone somewhere says, 'You are a horse,' or 'You are a hurricane,' or 'You are that thing in the room that makes all dogs go wild, that makes all dogs hungry, that makes all dogs believe in heaven.' And I am no longer the song in my head, the blood song in my head, I am that, or that, or something else. I never know for sure. They have to tell me exactly what I am, and then I can try to be that, because I have to be something. This isn't a problem. Because I like to look at pictures. I like to look at pictures of things that I like, because when I see a picture I like, I think, 'I'm that, too, that picture is me, that's me too. I'm a lot of things at once, and some of them are in my head and some of them are in your head.' But, oh. Oh. I'm never at home, unless I'm underwater. Just like you.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(And now, like in the best of the action-adventure-slasher films, when she speaks, vampires and seamonsters leave her mouth, and it's quite clear that something else is afoot, besides the feet, and the angry moocow of a moon is watching, because it's apparent that she's already halfway to somewhere else, and something got lost, but she can't remember what it was.)

SHE3PO:

This is exactly why vampire movies are my favorite. We live in a bloody time. It's nothing we don't already know, and nothing we can do anything about, apparently, except do what we do to take care of the victims, and the victims always look like our own children when their pictures are on the news. Which is why I can't watch the news. If we blew out all the candles in the city, all we would see is the light of the moon, and it might reveal how hungry for blood we all really are. I think we're lost, and I think we know the answers, but there are no real heroes left to try to make them work. It can't happen on its own, it needs us to work, and we're too tired. So if you, good sir, would take the time to muster the courage to open my neck with your teeth, you might find the way to my heart. But it can't happen here, there's too much light, and no one is looking at what's underneath this light. But I have a feeling you know. It can't happen here, but it can happen. But you need a spell, and you need the right smell, and you need to know exactly what you're doing, so you need a little practice. Everyone who's awake at this time of night understands that there is a perfect gothic lover out there waiting, and one of them looks like you, and one of them looks like me, but those two, the one like you and the one like me, they have to wait, so until they can be all in each other's business the way only vampires can be, they need to practice.

(In this play, everything is true. So, what she says is true, but she doesn't hear the brass bell calling him to the ceremony, and he's already still somewhere by the sea, making new charms in the dark by the sea, telling himself that she lost him a long time ago, but everything he tells himself is turning out to be wrong, so he really should just let himself be wrong long enough to stumble into something right, even though that sounds a little judgy.)

(So, even though she is starting to puncture his neck and getting ready to do her extra special move, we sense this might not be real. It's true but it's not real. This was not real. This was just practice, the next time they'll have to wear their real

Appendix E: The Play Texts

costumes, the ones made of leather and steel and something with flowers, just to keep it honest. Because it's a love story. Flowers and caresses and holding hands and shit like that.)

(And the moon shuts him up, utterly.)

But it does not end there, oh, no.

Aha ono

Tuna play (part one)

(Oh ho ho ho, kiddies, it's not over, no, not yet. Not yet at all. It goes on and it gets much much worse. First off, the not far away of everything turned out to be very far away, and the longer it went on being not far away, the further away it all started to look, and that's when things started to take a very peculiar turn. In the first place, there was nothing. Nothing ahead, and the behind started to look smaller, so much smaller, and it kept getting smaller until the behind turned into a small bird. And the bird pecked at his ribs for 28 days and 270 nights, until it woke him up altogether, and he found himself sitting in the most easily accessible place in the universe, and this is what happened there.)

(He is sitting in the fashionable way, crossing his legs in the studied gesture of his time and place. There is a loud thumping against the walls inside his head, and he is dreaming about the things that he could have if only he were somewhere else, if only he were someone else, and the list is extravagant and impressive, except for. Except for the lingering thought that this is exactly where he is supposed to be, because this is the night that nothing happens, and he'll remember this night for the rest of his life because this is the night when nothing changes utterly forever.)

HE:

Oh, this is the night I was dreading for all of my life, ever since I was a little psychiatrist, or wooden horse, an all day sucker, ever since then, this is the night that

Appendix E: The Play Texts

nothing happens, and it is exactly what I thought it was going to be like, and it's horrible, horrible, horrible, I wish my eyes were bleeding but instead it's just like this, just like it is, endless and interminable.

(And of course even that's not true.)

(And suddenly, without any warning, there are some figures who appear, and from a distance they appear enormously attractive and terribly interesting, but as they get closer we see that they are absolutely not. This is going to have to be done extremely well for it to be really effective. There are many ways to do this, to achieve this effect, this peculiar sense of derealization. How does derealization work? I can't tell you, I won't say it out loud here in front of everyone. But I will tell you this. In this theater, which is entirely based on all the best new methods of social change, there can be moments of improvisation. The performers might take the time to enact a kind of dialogue amongst themselves about the concerns and local politics of the day, and there might be a small argument, and this is the moment when it can open up to the spectators, who will make suggestions on how this might be resolved. Except this is not one of those moments. And if it were, I would shoot myself in the neck with a blowdart, because that's how I roll. Oh my god I fucking hate it when people set up the conditions for a dialogue. The people who set up the conditions are always the ones who will eventually run things, and we know what happens to them. Instead, the ones who insist on the conversation with guns made out of wood or butter, those are the ones who are capable of making a real conversation, because when you give up your butter for a gun instead, then you have a stake, a real stake, and there's nothing better than a stake with butter. We might mean snake here. However, there is a possibility that people in the audience may make suggestions on how they could make their

Appendix E: The Play Texts

lives just a little more interesting, and it would have to begin with how they talk amongst themselves in public, because they have to start saying things that are either shocking or terribly important or ridiculous, because there is a sense that we are really running out of time, and can't keep doing things the way we used to do them any more.)

HE:

Have you ever been arrested, come to from a blackout in a room filled with people who are looking at you, eaten something that you suspected might be poisonous, smoked something you thought might be laced, stolen something, had hot needles under your skin to leave permanent marks, walked into a sexual situation that you thought was suspicious (and then walked into the same situation again? and again?), put your hand out to an animal you have never seen before, petted a dog who made sounds that made you nervous, held your ground when a car was coming toward you, slid on pavement at a high speed, lost bone in a machine, been cut open in front of people who were not surgeons, taken a train to a city you've never heard of, walked a city whose language you could not speak, stayed out past four in the morning in that same city, or, have you ever fallen in love with someone who promised you they would hurt you? If you answered yes to three or more of the above questions, I forget the answer. But I think we could be friends. I think you and I are gonna be friends.

(Oh, but not tonight, this won't work tonight, there's something else that's going on, and it's just about to happen right now, but you'll probably miss it because you don't have the right friends on twitter.)

End of play.

No, wait.

End of play/7 (2)

(She is an antelope. Not in dress, the costume wouldn't suggest that at all, it's a little stylish and sort of goth, in fact. Nor is she antelope like in the way she acts, but there must be a touch of the accent in her speech. It's not an easy accent, however, and most actors would shy away from that altogether. But not you. In any case, it should be almost entirely imperceptible.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SHE3PO:

My first father, I mean boyfriend, I mean uncle, was a very famous psychoanalyst, and that made it very difficult during the already most difficult years. It marked me, yes, it did, but in a way that I could not appreciate at the time, because the mark was on my neck and everyone could see. The words “famous psychoanalyst” were on my neck. Which did nothing for my dreaming, except make them more important than bread.

HE:

I can't talk to you when you're like this, you're wild, like an antelope.

SHE3PO:

My second father, I mean boyfriend, I mean uncle, however, was nothing like the first, he was the opposite, and that was intentional.

HE:

Because by then you had already split yourself in two.

SHE3PO:

No, but close, by then I had already learned that the mind body distinction was unresolvable. It is impossible to split cleanly.

HE

Oh, I don't think so. I'm not split.

SHE3PO:

I don't think so. I think you're split, like most of us, you're a lot of people, and specifically, me.

HE:

I know what you mean. If I could get back all those hours, the thanksgiving dinners, the sweaty mornings in the park, the relentless chop chop chopping of the walnut chopper, instead of arguing with my fat monk, I mean racist uncle, I mean some relative who identifies with my gender in the same way I do, I would use those hours for something very specific and special, something like Habitat for Humanity.

SHE3PO:

Doctors without Borders.

HE:

The IRC.

SHE3PO:

Oh my god yes.

(They start having sex. But they will not stop talking. It's too bad.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SHE3PO:

It gets difficult because the body is a construction of the mind, and the mind is an extension of the body. I put these marks here, to signify myself, to myself or sometimes vis a vis another body in the form of a ghost pepper, I mean shadow, I mean constructing subject, and this becomes a working definition, although always for a very short time.

HE:

Very short and then sometimes very long, but always short again, but not that short. And not that long.

SHE3PO:

I like it that you pay attention.

(Interruption.)

ZIZEK (not yet a DOG):

And here we have a considerably weighted question, taking into account the nature of the so forth and so on, and we wonder, what kind of sex do they have exactly? Is it significantly different sex, or is it simply the usual, every cinematic convention, the breasts hidden by the sheet and so forth and so on, as the old joke goes, "After awhile every relationship is a same sex relationship, because you're having the same sex." But these are the very same structures that dictate a curious cultural prejudice, that we all engage in these things with a kind of reckless abandon which means finding ourselves doing the same exact things we always do, when we are rolling around and get caught up in the moment, so to speak, we end up doing the things that come naturally, which means, and this is where the imperialism of the western sexual experience catches itself, the use of props, positions that require practice and special breathing techniques, or any of the other accoutrements that are in fact part of a repertoire, an archive, in the other non-western regions or those regions where the regime of madness has not infiltrated itself like an amorphous mass, become something of the sort of thing like the ladies in pink giggling at the opera house.

SHE3PO:

I hate that rock star guy.

HE:

But he always draws such an impressive crowd, he really is a rock star.

(And there really is a crowd. And they realize that this will probably be one of those moments which will need more therapy later on. Because they will need some kind of help, and it has to be therapy. There are no pills for this.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SHE3PO:

And then the body, always already marked, is speaking the codes that are embedded in the things written on it always already, and these are constructions of the mind, except. The exception here. The body, as a site of traumatic experience, apprehends the very conditions of the marking in a way that makes it impossible not to conceive of itself differently, so that moment of pain becomes an inscription first on the body, which then dreams of further markings and further inscriptions before it writes its way into the mind.

HE:

We're stuck?

SHE3PO:

How?

HE:

We're stuck in that place between the mind and the body.

SHE3PO:

What?

HE:

We're stuck.

SHE3PO:

No, we're not.

HE:

What?

SHE3PO:

Why am I talking here? It's the body first.

HE:

And then we end up stuck in the mind, uh-huh.

SHE3PO:

No, shut up. The body is first, and the body is last.

HE:

Can you explain this to me when you are someone else? I almost get it, but it won't sink in until you're someone else.

SHE3PO:

Oh, I'll just stop then. Do you want me to stop?

HE:

Not just yet, no, not just yet.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(And because it is that night again, there is a parade that is a celebration of the full moon, a supermoon parade with moon cheese and fresh omelettes, mad fairy fire dancers and everything from the sea, and it takes all of our attention, because it is so lively and child friendly.)

End of play.

No.

end of play/7 (3)

(HE is talking to HE. Of course, they are not the same actor. However, there's no real way to tell the difference between the two, and the actors should not try to help.)

(What they say:)

SHE/HE2 :

So you think about me, I mean her.

HE:

But I'm not a stalker. It's not like that, like, whispering her name over and over again, you're just there, I mean, she's just there. And it's not like I miss her all the time, except when I think about it, I mean, it doesn't happen when I hear her name, you know?

SHE/HE2:

Sure, I don't know, yes.

HE:

Like in those songs, where people are like, 'Oh wow I hear her name, the sound of her name, oh wow, people say a name that sounds like hers and I'm all, ooh, nooooo.'

SHE/HE2:

I don't know that song.

HE:

It doesn't matter because it doesn't happen to me. Not your name, I mean her name. But you know what?

SHE/HE2:

I don't, no.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

It does happen when I hear the word 'miss.' Whenever I hear the word 'miss,' I think, aha, I miss you, or her, whatever. You know?

SHE/HE2:

I don't know you should maybe finish telling me something and then I can answer yes or no for sure.

HE:

Wow, thanks, I feel much better already just talking about this. Wow, hahaha. I'm all of a sudden feeling very light, and uh, what's that word they use in yoga?

SHE/HE2:

Corpse?

HE:

Expansive. I feel expansive.

SHE/HE2:

You are tall.

HE:

But not that tall, really. But here. I hear the word 'miss.' And that makes me feel, um, yes, I don't like to hear that word, because I feel that word all the time, it's just under my tongue, all the time, like I miss someone very much. I feel like I miss someone very much, and that's all about her, or you, or me, or whatever whatever right?

SHE/HE2:

Aha. Yes. Ok. The hardest thing I ever did was to have to go through being that, the thing that someone missed. Like her, or me, or you, I was a stand in for the one who was missed, and I even thought sometimes that I was the one who was missed, but I was not. I was like a marble in a marble maze, right?

HE;

Uh-huh, I mean I don't know, I mean ok.

SHE/HE2:

I was a really big marble, or a square marble, and I never fit into the hole in the maze anywhere.

HE:

If you were a square marble you couldn't even roll at all.

SHE/HE2:

Yes, exactly, life is hard.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

What did you do? When you realized you miss me, or were the one who was missed, or uh, when you understood you were square and not any of the things that are supposed to be on the board, you know, in that marble maze?

SHE/HE2:

I did what everyone does, I became someone else.

HE:

Oh, I don't know how to do that.

SHE/HE2:

Oh, you do, everyone does, because no one gets to stay who they are for very long, unless you never get out of bed.

(Pause.)

Hey, can we please have a real guy conversation, please?

HE:

Sure.

(Beat.)

Hahaha, pussy, hahaha.

SHE/HE2:

Hahaha, hot hot pussy, hahaha, pussy pussy pussy.

HE:

Hahaha.

(And now a doctor's appointment. Although it's sad that they are not having sex, in this scene it's almost better because it will not require a towel because no one spills anything.)

(She enters and he is already lying on the couch. She is carrying a bottle of ranch dressing, and she trips on her way to him, and spills the ranch dressing all over his stomach.)

HE:

Oh, no.

SHE3PO:

Hahaha, see how you like it.

(A racially ambiguous stagehand enters and cleans it up with a towel.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

That sure takes me back.

SHE3PO:

Tell me about your brother.

HE:

Well, it all started when I was born and he was already there. And it was always like that. He is always already there, and he shows me what to do when I get there myself.

SHE3PO:

Like shaving or climbing mountains or fighting bulls.

HE:

Yes, except it was smoking pot and drinking beer and then mixing them all together, but not, you know, willy-nilly. And whiskey, oh wow, whiskey.

SHE3PO:

Mm hm, mm hm, mm hm, do go on.

HE:

The first time I had whiskey it was because I got this football player back together with his girlfriend and he bought me a bottle of Jack Daniels to thank me.

SHE3PO:

Oh.

HE:

But remember, I'm not a hillbilly. I only did that for about three years, and then I discovered Kessler's.

SHE3PO:

I didn't know you were such a cowboy, I had no idea.

HE:

Sure, I'm you know, split, a lot of people, like the sea, or the, or the seasons, or the cuticle and the rock salt.

SHE3PO:

Huh?

HE:

Cuticle and rock salt. Symbols of the Freemasons. I can't really talk about it.

SHE3PO:

That's why I took you on as a patient to fall in love with, and break all kinds of social barriers, good god, that's hot. And what happened to this brother?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

It's kind of hard to talk about because it chokes me up, so I don't like to talk about it.

SHE3PO:

Ok.

HE:

All right, all right, I'll talk about it. He never liked football, and so, he is sad.

SHE3PO:

Your brother is sad.

HE

He doesn't like football. Yes.

SHE3PO:

It runs in your family, doesn't it, this sadness and not liking football?

HE

Yes.

SHE3PO:

Is it the deadly strain of not liking football?

HE:

I lost a lot of relatives to it, and everyone around me seems to have it, because I seem to be a magnet for this sadness, but I'm not like that.

SHE3PO:

But you don't like football.

(Long pause.)

HE:

You're some doctor. That's true. But I escaped it, the sad part.

SHE3PO:

How?

HE:

When I wake up, I get out of bed and get dressed.

SHE3PO:

That works?

HE:

It does, I wake up and I think, 'Oh, who should I dress like today, who do I get to be?' and then I'm getting dressed, and I am thinking, 'What's going on?' it's like meditating

Appendix E: The Play Texts

except I do it really fast so it might not be the same thing, but it's pretty close, and I think, 'I miss someone, I miss that someone, and today I am going to dress like the person who misses someone and I'm going to go looking for them.'

SHE3PO:

Really? That works?

HE:

Every day.

SHE3PO:

It wouldn't work for me, because of gravity.

HE:

Gravity.

SHE3PO:

Gravity sucks you back into bed. And it can happen any time of day. You're going to get sucked back into bed. It's coming, you just don't know when.

HE:

So you spend your days worried about getting sucked.

SHE3PO:

Yes. And it works, it's a very effective way to live, because I'm always ready for it to happen any time.

HE:

And you don't feel like you're missing anything, you know, being worried all the time?

SHE3PO:

Miss anything?

HE:

Yeah.

SHE3PO:

I miss you.

HE:

Oh, sure.

SHE3PO:

I mean, I missed you.

(Long pause. End of play.)

end of play/7 (4)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(Now that we're all revved up and know exactly what to expect from this traditional structure, we are absolutely wet with anticipation for another buddy scene, when men talk about sentimental things and it is so surprising because they are also dudes, mooks, joe the scrivener types. And with these breaks in gender stereotypes, the history of performance just now boosts up a notch, like with Eddie Murphy films where he seems almost to be apologizing for being such a homophobic asshole in his younger years, but the transgression is not so clear, oh no, not here, it's much harder to see, and that's why there's no buddy scene at all. But if there were, it would look like this. They are sitting in a bar just like they do on television, young guys in nice clothes and maybe even one of them is wearing a suit, and looks like an older Doogie Hauser, and says:)

HE:

Tonight I'm buying, feeling good, feeling awful good, have a look at 3 o'clock, the one in the aqua tank, those, my friend, are real.

(Laughs.)

SHE/HE2:

I don't think there's anything real about anyone.

HE:

That's true. I was driving today and I saw a man with a mannequin hand.

SHE/HE2:

You did.

HE:

I did.

SHE/HE2:

Tell me about the man with the mannequin hand.

HE:

Uh, I don't know, it's not much to. I was driving, and I saw this guy, he had his hand outside the window, but it was a mannequin hand.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SHE/HE2 (whispers):

I've seen him.

HE:

When you talk like that, it really makes me feel like we're being watched.

SHE/HE2:

We are being watched.

HE:

Ok, and that's reassuring.

SHE/HE2:

And the good part, the really good part, you still get to breathe, even when you're being watched, even if you're not real, you get to breath, and that's almost like being real. Or maybe it's as close as you get.

HE:

Can we please go back to pretending that we're men who like football please.

(Pause.)

SHE/HE2:

And that, my friend, is imagine—wait for it. Dairy. We have options.

HE:

Imagine-dairy?

SHE/HE2:

Oh, just play along because I don't like feeling insane and this will help. We have options.

HE:

We do have options, and my suggestion is to go for the one on the left, and I'll go for the one on the right.

SHE/HE2:

I only see one girl there.

HE:

I know.

(Laughs, milk flying out of noses, dogs blowing smoke rings, itching powder and joy buzzers, these guys are outrageous.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

I sometimes think that it would be nice to settle down with one someone, you know, that one perfect someone and just settle down, and it sounds nice, so very nice, except I did that once, and I think if I did it again it would be romantic like prison is romantic, where we become each other's guards, and because I'm tall, I can see out the windows, so I am a guard with a distinct advantage.

HE2:

Then the only chance you have at a real and honest relationship would have to be based on height. You would have to be exactly the same height, or buy special shoes.

HE:

Oh, she's looking at you, watchout.

(HE, the first one, cockblocks HE the second, all for the attention of the girl in the aqua tank, and it's kind of friendly and violent all at the same time, because love is like that, and that is how I didn't meet your mother.)

(But that's all of that scene and there's another one.)

SHE:

My favorite part, I don't think I ever told you about my favorite part, but my favorite part was this time, there was this time, when I was living as a man. I was young, though, so maybe I will say boy. I was living as a boy, and I was living in a tower. I had long hair. I need to say that first. I meant to say that first. I was a boy with long hair, and I was living in a tower, and there was this other boy who was in love with me, and he used to climb up my hair every night. Does that sound familiar?

HE:

Of course. I've climbed up a lot of hair towers, though. But that's not how it sounds. I mean, I'm not, you know, climbing towers all the time, not like, I'm not like. I've just known a lot of people with hair and I've climbed up their hair a lot.

SHE:

Right, I think this was you. But it really doesn't matter. Because for me, the best part was when he couldn't reach me any more, and I wanted him to reach me, but he couldn't, because I had gotten a hair cut, because I wanted to be someone else.

HE:

Because you wanted to have short hair like a boy.

SHE:

Wow, you think boys have to have short hair?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

No, not entirely or exclusively.

SHE:

What do you mean, then?

HE:

I don't know what I mean, I'm not sure what you want me to mean, so I'll just wait until you finish the story.

SHE:

No, that was it, that's the end of the story. I cut my hair and he couldn't reach me any more.

HE:

That's it?

SHE:

That's it.

HE:

That's a terrible story.

SHE:

Oh, but the things we talked about, the way he talked to me, after he couldn't reach me. He said the prettiest things to me, after he couldn't reach me.

HE:

What things?

SHE:

All the things he wanted me to be, and all the things he wanted to be to me, he told me about all the people we could be, and that was the closest thing to love I ever knew.

HE:

Ok, that was me.

SHE:

Yes.

HE:

And that was you, I remember when you were just a boy.

SHE:

It was a very long time ago.

HE:

Yes, a very long time ago, I remember you now.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SHE:

Yes, you do.

(Oh, I had no idea that would go so spooky all of a sudden, so Rapunzel all of a sudden. There are blackbirds flying by the window. If there is a window, that is. There are blackbirds, real blackbirds flying outside of it. This will have to be very carefully staged, because we will have to keep the blackbirds in a special bin until this very profound and necessary realistic stage effect.)

end of play/7 (5)

(Oh my gosh now the NARRATOR, a DOG, shows up, it's about goddam time, we've been doing this for awhile and oh my gosh that certainly would have helped. NARRATORS can at least tell us where to put our eyes at least and make a few little connections here and there so that we can really finally connect the dots. The NARRATOR has also been through all of this and might know exactly how it ends.)

NARRATOR:

I don't.

(Or perhaps not. It may not matter all that much if they know the exact ending or not, they see things that we don't and give us a sense of security. Let's hear it.)

(The NARRATOR, however, talks like Peter Lorre trapped under a jar lid for the space of a childhood, that is to say, exactly what you would expect but the opposite of what you really want.)

NARRATOR:

Honestly, I would like to make these things clearer, except I am very angry with love these past several years, the world has brought me nothing but dark and stormy lovers who I adored, and light and breezy lovers who tickled me, and it's also brought me some of the worst moments of my life, because. Because of this. These rains, these rains, the rains that come down on me, they come down on everyone, and they keep coming down all over me all over me. I remember you, dancing after midnight in the

Appendix E: The Play Texts

rain, I was covered with white cloth and my tongue was numb from darvocet or percocet, I forget which, and you were dancing in the rain, and you looked so young in those days, you looked like you couldn't have been older than you were in those days, and your teeth were sharp for the war, but you hadn't tasted any real blood out there, but you tasted it anyway, in the family, because for you it was all always in the family, and that was all much more than anyone should have to live through in one life, and your teeth were sharp, could cut through nails, and the skin on your back was as tough as any kind of hide, and that was the night I met you, and the night I fell in love with you for the fifth time. You talked crazy, and your laugh, crazy, and your belly held enough wine to drown an army, but I don't think I ever remember you eating anything. And the worst part of it was that when I saw you dancing in the rain, I knew that I didn't want to know myself after I got over you. So I never did.

(Oh my gosh, now that wasn't helpful at all. On these kinds of post-rain nights when the ground is still so very hot and wet from that storm, we all want a promise, something that says this summer will be like this in places, even though we know there will come a point where we all burn for 40 days and there's nothing in sight to make the ground smell like it does when the sky kisses the bushes of the earth. And this didn't help that at all, and the NARRATOR is just as damaged as we are, and that's not so very comforting. Except the NARRATOR always comes before the dogs speak, and that's worth the wait. And we wait. The NARRATOR exits, and off stage, the NARRATOR changes costume, changes into the DOG costume, and it takes awhile, but there's nothing to cover the change. It needs to look amateurish enough so that a good portion of the spectators lose their confidence in the play. And we need to be prepared for that, for the thought that we may never get their confidence back, and this whole thing was, ultimately, not as good as it could have been if only we had been more vigilant, but we were not. DOG enters, finally, after the feeling in the theater has turned.)

DOG:

I think I'm lost here, I can't remember if I was supposed to follow your trail or let you just disappear over the horizon line. But I can tell you that all those nights I spend in the deep part of the desert that no one else knows, in the middle of the heat I see your

Appendix E: The Play Texts

tracks, and you call to me in your cruelest voice, and tell me these are all the things that I have to know. We lost each other, and it's never been a game about who lost who first, or who lost who first, but we lost each other utterly, and the doors are always sealed with the salt of those kisses that we give when the lovers we want are much too far away, and this war is too relentless, and we just need a rest. But there's always another mountain coming toward us, and when I get close, I remember you very differently, I remember you in a way that makes you come back to me, your bones take shape in the rocks that mark the dead of 40,000 years ago, and your bloodlines are in the rivers, and I am remembered, and I am put together, and I am not alone here. It's true I have my spirits, and they make for wonderful lovers, the kind of lover that marries you inside your head, and they are jealous enough to remind me that you could never be like that for me, except I know something. I know something important. It's close. When you're close, the blood and the bones are close to me like children, and I see something in this, a spark that carries the cells that make me remember you. Because I can't forget your smell.

(We don't really know what to do with the dog right now, but summer is coming, hooray, hooray.)

end of play/7 (6)

(The sixth part is by far the worst part up until now. HE is chattering on the sofa, covered with ranch dressing, and she is sitting on her desk, also covered with ranch dressing, and something about them is very much like spring salad, and oh my gosh there is a DOG in the room that might be a wolf but we don't know yet. In fact, we don't want to spook the DOG so we pretend not to see it.)

HE:

This is nice, I didn't expect to see you here, but this is perfect, and we should have a picnic, something we can do to pretend this isn't happening.

SHE3PO:

It's not happening, and even if it were, we would still run out of things to talk about eventually.

HE:

But we could always make fun of things we don't understand, you know, how people do.

SHE3PO:

Everything has ranch on it.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

Everything is salad, because I read that women like salad.

(Oh, there's a lot to unpack in that, and we wonder, will he unpack that? No, he will not.)

SHE3PO:

I wonder if it's going to rain, because they say that it's bad if it rains on your picnic with ranch and salad or whatever whatever.

HE:

We should say things like, Oh, this is very crisp and fresh salad.

SHE3PO:

But there really isn't salad, it's all just dressing.

HE:

It's ranch.

SHE3PO:

Uh-huh, here we go.

HE:

It's very healthy.

SHE3PO:

Right. Right.

HE:

Nutritious.

SHE3PO:

Uh-huh. People could live on it.

HE:

They could.

SHE3PO:

I'm not going to start licking up the ranch dressing.

HE:

It's healthy and revolutionary.

SHE3PO:

Not really revolutionary. You licking the ranch, maybe a little.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

It's not for me, it's for you.

SHE3PO:

I'm not licking up the ranch dressing, I won't do it.

HE:

You won't even try?

SHE3PO:

I just want salad.

HE:

Ok. Thank you. Do you need a fork?

SHE3PO:

There's really nothing to eat.

(He is looking so sad that it's unbearable.)

Ok, give me a fork.

HE:

There are no forks.

(Now it's even more sad and it's almost impossible.)

I really didn't prepare. I didn't think you'd come.

SHE3PO:

I'm always here, I never left.

DOG:

Excuse me, I need your fork.

(The DOG eats all the salad and talks the truth.)

In all my favorite TV shows, there is that part where the one person, or dog, misses the other person, or dog, and it's an endless montage of them missing and being missed, and we need that here. We need montage, because it's something we can write about for conferences, the use of montage in representation of absence and longing. And after the montage, there's the part where the one person, or dog, is going on and living their life, and the other person, or dog, is doing the same, and they both do it, and in the worst shows, they go on and grow into their lives and it's just that, they get over it, and that sounds very real. But in the best shows, there's another moment, and we need to get to that, but if we don't ever get to that, then we are in montage for a very long time, and that's sweet to watch but impossible to live, unless you are a dog, and you get to eat all the salad. And let me tell you, sweet young things, I motherfucking love salad.

Vinaigrettes and radicchios and all those other fucking yummy salad components, bits of goat cheese and pomegranate something something, that's the goddam best. It's nourishing, and it's fantastic. In the middle ages, when we all first met, they had better salads than we do today, because things were fresher, and so many people, or dogs,

Appendix E: The Play Texts

were dying of disease, you didn't have to compete. There were always extra forks. That's what we're reliving here. Nothing more and nothing less. Oh my god look at the moon I am going to go look at the moon, who's with me?

(DOG runs out. There's no more salad. They have to make a decision, and it's not that hard, but it takes a lot longer than we have film for.)

SHE3PO:

The moon.

HE:

It's watching me.

SHE3PO:

It's made of cheese, I think that moon is a cheese-moon.

(Dog pause.)

Dog end.

No, dog, no, no end, dog, no.

end of play/7 (7)

(They are talking in a room. There is a DOG running back and forth like a fucking crazy maniac.)

SHE:

So tell me...

HE:

Yes....

SHE:

I'm wondering....

HE:

Yes...

DOG: (running back and forth)

Haha, haha, haha, haha.

SHE:

I wonder if you grew a beard which famous celebrity you would look like.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

That's a terrific question, really wonderful question, magnificent.

SHE:

I mean 'continental philosopher.' I didn't mean to say 'famous celebrity,' I meant 'continental philosopher.'

HE:

Oh, I know, I know what you meant. I love continental philosophers, I wish I had a collection of continental philosopher t-shirts.

SHE:

Oh, wow, so do I!

(And here she laughs really, really hard and as soon as she does she realizes that it was much too hard. But now it's too late and she is aware of her upper lip, so she chews on it. He, meanwhile, is lost in lofty thoughts.)

HE:

My favorite by far is the one who led the Haitian Rebellion.

SHE:

I've never heard of that.

HE:

It happened a lot longer ago than before you were born ago. I'm not suggesting that you're young.

SHE:

I wish I knew something more than little things about everything, and something more than the very specific things I do know deep things about, and the continental philosophers writing about Haiti is really in both categories, but I missed a class I think, because I should know. Oh, I wish I knew.

(And it's peculiar how she gets lost in wishing she knew, and even more peculiar that he doesn't really understand what they're talking about, so he starts to throw out French names to sound important.)

HE:

No, no, it's not something everyone knows about, because it happened so long ago, when I was younger, or not yet alive, or uh, in that previous life, where maybe I was Haitian and that's why I'm so interested in it. Does that count as being part something other? Past lives? I wonder. Like Chaussant le Sirve talks about. Would those get us

Appendix E: The Play Texts

into the slippery categories of otherness if we counted our past lives as necessary and contingent parts of our identities, because of history being a circle and blabla, blabla.

SHE:

I don't know, because I am thinking about my hands, and how I like to hold things in them. Like books. I like to hold things in my hands.

HE:

It was probably farther back than that, even, I mean, farther than I'm thinking, maybe by 80 or so years, like how Poussant Jean-Marie Kardec wrote in *La Nuit D'Homme*.

SHE:

I need to read that. This is why it's nice to have an adult conversation for lunch. For once. I'm not around people who are so, so not like the same age as the people I'm around, who are younger, I mean, who are my sister. Much younger than me. By several years. I'm so much older than her.

HE:

I was once at a conference where I was the youngest person there.

SHE:

You were?

HE:

I was pretty young back then. A lot younger than I am now. I mean, it really wasn't that long ago. I'm still young.

SHE:

But I feel old, and that's why this is going so well, because it suits my age.

(DOG suddenly goes fierce and attacks his leg a little bit, but you know, not enough to draw blood.)

HE:

I have a dog on my leg.

SHE:

I like the way that sounds, this is such a promising evening.

DOG (suddenly wise beyond his years):

But not so promising after all, kiddies. Because the past is a hell only when it's something you want to live in, but can't. Nostalgia is hell, and it's worse when the present is perfect but there's still longing, because when you miss someone, it's easy to get lost in the mix and forget to take out the trash and wash the dishes. And scene.

(That's it, then. The DOG ended the scene, just like that. This is so arrogant. But they

Appendix E: The Play Texts

don't notice.)

SHE:

If I were a dog, that's exactly the kind of dog I would be, so bold, so so bold.

HE:

That dog just makes me nervous, and reminds me that I have to take out the trash and wash the dishes.

SHE:

That's you, you're just projecting onto the dog.

HE:

I don't know if I believe in projection. Do you?

SHE:

That's like saying you don't believe in air.

HE:

Maybe I don't believe in air.

SHE:

I don't think it makes any difference if you believe in it or not.

HE:

You suddenly remind me of someone.

SHE:

Of course I do.

(And they project.)

end of play (7)/8

(Words on screen: And the eighth time around, in the retelling of the story that should be called, "I Miss You," he went into the same psychoanalytical room and was putting on the suit of the therapist and adjusting his new beard when she walked in.)

SHE3PO:

Good afternoon, doctor, I am making a very innocent visit.

(However, when she drops the arab strap and we see the centaur legs coming out from beneath her victorian skirts, we get

Appendix E: The Play Texts

the feeling there's something on her mind,
and innocence isn't a part of it, not so
much.)

HE:

I often get confused for being a man who dresses in men's clothing but is secretly
wearing something special underneath.

SHE3PO:

I really did intend for this to be innocent, it has to be, because now I'm a teacher and I'm
married to a lawyer, and we're expecting.

HE:

Is it serious?

SHE3PO:

It's as serious as TV.

HE:

Congratulations.

(He says with great composure but then he
bursts out crying. Pause. He goes into the
other room and shaves his very bearded
face. And the DOG enters.)

DOG: (smoking a pipe, to disguise himself as the
dogfather of psychoanalysis)

Excuse me. I'm standing in for his beard, because when he comes back, the beard will
be gone, and we need a beard. Or, as we say, dog. We need a dog. And this, this is
beautiful, just beautiful. You two inspire me, you make me want to live. I'm putting
away all of my old ways, and now I am a professional dog, one who can keep every
secret. Tell me about him.

SHE3PO:

What?

DOG:

Tell me everything, my sweet, you can trust me.

SHE3PO:

Like what?

DOG:

Every secret.

SHE3PO:

You can keep a secret?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

DOG:

I can, I'm absolutely on your side. My mouth is a vault.

SHE3PO:

He's like TV to me.

DOG:

Wow.

SHE3PO:

It's intense.

DOG:

You're just like me.

SHE3PO:

Don't tell.

DOG:

My mouth is a vault.

(DOG exits and we hear their conversation
off stage.)

DOG:

She thinks you are like TV.

HE:

Oh, dog, I don't know why anyone ever tells you anything.

(They come out.)

HE:

How am I like TV?

SHE3PO:

Because when I look at you while I'm eating a bag of chips, I get very calm.

HE:

That's so sweet.

SHE3PO:

And I don't think we should trust this dog.

DOG:

That's true, I really can't be trusted.

(Long awkward pause.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

DOG:

So. Gang. What you say we turn on the old TV and watch us some football. I used to watch football with my brother. Oh, dog, my brother!

(DOG cries.)

SHE3PO:

Tell me about your brother.

(This is one of the most extraordinary moments in modern psychiatric medicine, when the patient heals the doctor, but not through traditional means.)

(The dog puts on the arab strap and speaks.)

DOG:

I was not an only dog, there were others, there were brothers. But there was one, born before his time, and his breath was so very brief, and there was nothing anyone could do. The grief haunted my family for more than one generation.

HE:

In dog time that's not very long, it's 1/7 of everything, every unit of time is divided by 7 in the dog mind, and everything that has a size is also smaller, and that's why dogs are not afraid of anything except fireworks and thunder.

DOG:

Your math is good but your heart is cold, you crybaby in women's underwear. My dog, man, have you any morals? Grief is grief, and the way we long is exactly the way we love. Sometimes you're lucky enough to experience it the way you both do, as a slow and persistent itch, its weight is beautiful, but you don't know that, because you can't see how it's changing you, making room for you to become exactly who you are. That's what love and death do to people. With dogs, it's something else, it's like madness. Because of the problem of origins and endings, they're always short, and when you cut them up, they get so small in dog sizes and dog times that they really do cease to exist. I lost my brother, and I've been looking for him ever since, and it's an endless cycle, but it's the one that I ride.

SHE3PO:

Dogs can't ride bikes, their legs don't work like that.

DOG:

Can I please have my moment here?

(They wait. DOG has a moment.)

Thank you. It's amazing, I feel three feet tall. You're some doctor.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

You know, dog, you're really a lot like me.

DOG:

We're all a lot like you.

(They all laugh, like at the end of a scooby doo.)

not end of not this not here

part nine of six

(Scene: It's one of those spectacularly stormy nights, dark, too, yes that, dark and stormy is exactly where this all starts.)

(Note: I don't really know where this is going.)

(Things were kind of upheaved, and there wasn't anything to go on to make sense out of anything, and all he knew was that all the usual places to put levers were moved, and all the familiar identities had stopped working. Like so many people who get caught in a storm where there is no rain, it was impossible to navigate because it looked simple.)

(Now he's on fire, in front of a class, and he's talking too fast because the ones who are paying attention are thinking too fast.)

HE:

So, uh, the mirror, it's uh, it's not comfortable, the thing where you see yourself outside yourself, repeating itself, well, uncanny, you know, the uncanny, because it's always in your head, like a secret, and then when it's out there, well, yeah, and you get that feeling that the clues are all there, and everyone else in the world has put them together, and they're waiting for you to come to the same conclusion: this is in your head. But not simply, like you know, gosh, just stop it, it's in your head, kind of thing, more like, we're all in each other's heads and no one really sees anything outside of that because we need each other to see each other, to get a glimpse, of something, that thing, that thing in you that misses, that wants to keep missing, because that's you know, that's your compass, only the idea of a compass pointing at nothing, well, it's uncomfortable, and without the something, it's like, like, a baby without the blanket or whatever, we want to leave traces and have things leave traces on us, even if it means missing that period of nothingness, which is terrifying to me, but there's you know, the thought, that

Appendix E: The Play Texts

if you enter into that, then everything will happen and your life will start, you will be in the story of your life after that, which is lovely, but not at the time when you're anxious, because that means then that this life isn't really happening yet, and we're not really living yet, even if that condition is only temporary, no one wants to live in it, so we think of things that might substitute for the thing we want to say, which is always, 'I Miss You,' but we don't know who we're saying it to, yet.

STUDENT/Objet A/HER:

Hahaha, I'm making a joke right now about the difference between your generation and mine, hahaha..

(They all laugh at how ironic this is, and what a horrible situation we are living in, and how this classroom, oh, it's so much like life.)

STUDENT/Objet A/HER:

My real question though, I read about your research, and let me ask you: Have you ever brought anything back from the dead?

HE:

Like a monster? Like a Frankenstein Monster?

(And the students are all so thrilled, because they've heard about this, this dangerous mad scientist type, and his history.)

HE:

I have not thought about that in years, kiddies, not in years, but oh, there was a time, oh there was a time.

STUDENT/Objet A/HER:

Tell me about the monster, and tell me about the wolves.

HE:

It was a moonless morning, just like this one.

(And on the desk in front of god and everybody, a monster comes back to life. And his hands are filled with oil, oil that starts to burn under his skin.)

In all of the work, there is always a wolf somewhere just beneath the surface. The skin of the painting, the plaster on the statue, and the border between the subject and object, they all work together to disguise the wolf. This place, this stuff, this discourse, is populated by monsters. But remember, I'm not a Benedictine monk.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

STUDENT/Objet A/HER:

If that thing that is between what I think is you and what I think is me turns out to be the territory of the wolf, then I would like to live there, inside of that. Because I don't trust you, whoever you are, whoever 'you' has ever meant, and as far as me, I'm convinced that I'm a reflection of you, of yours. I'm a reflection of yours. But to be a wolf, that's something else entirely. If it's close, anywhere close to being a boy, or a man, but different, is it different?

HE:

I don't even know what we're talking about any more.

STUDENT/Objet A/HER:

First, you get born into a body, next you learn all your senses from the inside, and then your senses get written over with something else, and that's all there is, unless. Unless you die, and come back to life, as a boy, then a man, then a wolf, all the things that we do to become animals, but you have to die first, and to die first, you have to paint the mirror black, and stop looking for yourself everywhere.

HE:

Hahaha, this is where I make an uncomfortable joke about something that is tangentially related to what you just said, because really, this monster here, is a mirror, it's a mirror, this monster, like everything, is a mirror.

STUDENT/Objet A/HER:

Yes. Can I confess something? I don't think I made a good boy. Or man. I don't know how to be a good man.

HE:

Hahaha, who does?

(And they all gather in the antechamber where sophisticated ladies smoking pipes are talking again about Rimbaud and Kerouac and Baudelaire, because it can never get too French, but spring still refuses to open her mouth, because the dance in time is still pregnant with longing, as slow and sticky as molasses, and the things of the grave are moving aside for the things of grace, to infiltrate the too-bright world in a very silent and wondrous wandery time.)

End of lexicon.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SHE3PO (wants to say something so she just interrupts, she just comes in and interrupts):

There is a day, this day when I love someone who is not you, I don't know if it's before, or after, or during, it does not matter so much, because. I don't know you, who you are, exactly, and if I'm saying this now, to the wrong person, then that means that how I speak in love isn't inspired by the one I love, but is already half-born in me, and they might help me get the words out of my mouth, maybe. I don't think anyone who ever loved anyone ever did say anything that means anything, other than 'I love you.' I don't think. I don't know, but I don't think so. And if we can even say anything, whatever, that's true, it doesn't exist in language, but we have to keep saying things anyway, so I say these things because I'm really terribly anxious that if I don't say these things, I will never get to say these things, even though I think I'm supposed to know these things so that I have them and can say them to the right person when they do show up, like I should wait and say them to the right person, like there is a person we were born to love, and every time we do feel anything like love, we start to remember the words, but we should wait, but I'm very terribly anxious that they won't show up, so I might say them anyway, and I might say them to you but too early, before you are who I think you are, even though the you who I want you to be is not you at all, so I'm anxious, but I think we're all like that.

(Thank you, SHE3PO.)

end of play/7 (9)

(This is a hard one, because it's an intensive therapy session with just him and the dog, but she's also there, hiding in the bookshelf, disguising herself as books, but we don't let on that we notice that she's there because it might spook her.)

HE:

This is hard because it's so intense.

DOG:

I am an intense dogtor. Please, go on.

HE:

I feel like I can tell you anything, dog.

DOG:

You can, you certainly can. Your secrets are safe with me.

HE:

But at the same time, I know that I really can't tell you everything, I mean, I will, but it's not safe, because you'll tell people.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

DOG:

I promise I won't.

HE:

I believe you, except I really don't, because everything I've told you before has been spilled out of your mouth anytime anyone asks.

DOG:

That's not true, and if it is, there are good reasons.

HE:

But this time it's different.

DOG:

Absolutely.

HE:

Because this time I feel like you won't tell because it's all too secret and true and I'm sure you won't tell.

DOG:

You're smart. You learn from the past like no one I've ever met before. There was one patient, no, this is secret. I shouldn't tell you. Can I tell you?

HE:

Yes.

DOG:

You'll keep it secret?

HE:

Yes.

DOG:

I had a patient once who had a peculiarly pronounced sense that he missed someone very much, and this was so pronounced in fact, that he started to project this sense onto people he knew already, when in fact, it turned out that he missed someone he had not yet met.

HE:

That was me.

DOG:

Oh, that's right.

HE:

But I'm sure I had good reasons.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

DOG:

I doubt that, but go on, I won't judge you, even if you do keep doing the same stupid things over and over like a goddam fool.

HE:

Well, this time, it begins with this morning. I was watching the Office.

DOG:

I fucking love that show.

HE:

This was the one where Jim is missing Pam, because she's attending body modification school in another city, and he thinks she'll come back, but not soon, but some time, but he's starting to think she'll never come back. So he's sad, so he locks himself in his room with this dog, so it's Jim and the dog getting into funny antics. Meanwhile, Pam is replaced with someone from the Chicago office, and she looks similar to Pam, but not that similar and then Jim decides he doesn't want to be Jim any more, because he doesn't like being watched like a television. And Jim slowly starts to figure out that he is becoming the dog, and wonders if they all are.

DOG:

Dogammit that's beautiful, we need more dogs on TV. Really, what's important here is that you saw a little hint of yourself in this Pam.

HE:

Jim. I'm Jim. I'm not Pam.

DOG:

Sure you're not.

HE:

Oh, now I'm confused.

DOG:

Analysis is confusing. Tell me, where is this Jim, or as you say, Pam, in all of this?

HE:

It doesn't matter. He is becoming a dog, so it doesn't matter.

DOG:

If he becomes the dog, then what does the dog become?

HE:

I don't know, more dog? I think everyone becomes a dog? Or dog like? I don't really know.

DOG:

Don't they talk? He and his dog.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

No, they don't speak, not like people talking, you know, not like that.

DOG:

Why?

HE:

Because there's a difference in, uh, languages.

DOG:

Yes, yes there is. I fucking love this story, it's got everything. Do go on.

HE:

Every time they do communicate, you know, beyond the usual, sit, stay, let me outside, they have to do it by going under water, and they meet under water, and sometimes they don't meet, but they've left messages, messages on the ocean floor for each other.

(By now the DOG is crying his eyes out because this is the saddest story he's ever heard. Or she's ever heard. We haven't defined the dog yet. There are lots of things that the dog could be, and he or she are just some of them.)

DOG:

What kinds of messages?

HE:

There's a 'like' button on the bottom of the ocean, and they hit that 'like' button to show each other they've been there.

DOG:

I liked the British version much better.

(Suddenly DOG gets an idea.)

I'm going to try something, where I'll get a replica of her, and you talk to the replica as if it were her, and we'll see how that goes.

(This is very sneaky, because DOG grabs SHE from the bookcase and she sits in front of HE as if she were a replica. And maybe she is, because no one is what they pretend to be, except sometimes we get close when we pretend with just the right amount of panache.)

DOG:

Tell her what you can't say.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

Oh, that's too broad, give me an example.

DOG:

Something like, life without you is like bread without the butter, a bialy without the cream cheese, a hot yoohoo, the moon without the cheese, you're the yo yo on my string, and without you I can't, uh, I can't...

HE:

Walk the dog?

DOG:

Haha, funny. You know what I mean. Tell her.

(Long pause.)

HE:

Does the story end?

(SHE, meanwhile, starts to tremor and spasm, enough so that the DOG just freaks the fuck out.)

DOG:

Hahaha I don't know what that means, hahaha, I am going to go get a spoon, hahaha, uh oh!

HE:

Why a spoon?

DOG:

I have no idea! I really don't know! I don't have a clue! I need to go get a spoon!
(DOG leaves and comes back with a spoon.)

HER:

This flesh, these cells, from star stuff, everyone here knows everyone, there is no end there is no beginning but. You caught me. You catch me. You look at me and I see you out of the corner of my eye, you catch me. My favorite night: In a car in the back everyone thinks I am asleep, everyone thinks I am asleep and no one is looking at me. No one but the stars. Every single star is watching me. And I'm watching back. Eye contact. We recognize each other. My favorite. The rest of you: stop staring.

(Um. That, now that. We don't know what to do with that. Even DOG can't think of anything to say after that. So, after that, DOG and HE look a little bit uncomfortable. Now this, this

Appendix E: The Play Texts

uncomfortable pause goes on, and for too long, because listen this is because why. This last part was so distracting that even the light board operator forgets what they were doing next, so there's a cue that doesn't happen for a while.)

DOG (covering for the cue):

Tell me about your dream.

HE:

There's a plow. I mean, a country sausage.

DOG:

No, thank you, I don't eat meat.

HE:

I mean a garden snake. And a donut with teeth. And a nun wearing my mother's wedding dress. Hey, wait, you're a vegetarian? A vegetarian dog? I never heard of that.

DOG:

I'm very unusual. Exotic. And I want you. To open your mouth to this life.

HE:

Oh, no, thank you.

DOG:

Look at me, love me, love will take us higher. You lovin' me. And I'm drivin' yo benz.

HE:

No, dog, no. It can never be like that.

DOG:

Why?

HE:

Not for us.

DOG:

Why not?

HE:

It can't be.

DOG:

Sure it can. Just tell me what you're looking for, and I'll be that.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

I need the kind of love that makes me drive, relentlessly.

DOG:

Oh, I'll do that.

HE:

A thousand miles across the desert non-stop.

DOG:

You would need to stop for gas.

HE:

No, dog, no. I don't stop. Not for anything.

DOG:

Oh, please. You would have to stop. Haha, no gas, haha.

HE:

You can go a thousand miles without stopping.

DOG:

I don't think so.

HE:

I think you can.

DOG:

Let's do the math. Let's say you get 32 miles to the gallon.

SHE (comes to):

Please. No math.

HE:

No math, no math.

(HE and SHE exit.)

DOG:

It was still work. This will work. Oh, this is going to work.

(DOG plays with the spoon.)

Not really the end, but maybe it's close.

But first there is a short surreal play about love.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

A SHORT SURREAL PLAY ABOUT LOVE

(Because it is a surrealist play, HE writes on the bodies of skeletons from the models of paintings from Vienna in the 16th century. There's music, accountably, playing in the background, and from far off, we hear the whispers of 17 popes with cantaloupes for heads, reminiscing about ice cream and etc.)

HE (writing):

The candle holder is angry, a drunken constable.

HE (speaking):

Note to self: what is a constable?

HE (writing):

And there are seven dogs surrounding my bed, because they have come from the sea they are wet and they are angry, dressed like hierophants, and making shadows on my skin that are the signs of the winter coming fast.

HE: (speaking):

It's not even close to winter, this is so brilliant.

HE (writing):

And suddenly quite without warning, he blows a high-pitched whistle. The dogs make no notice, because they are from the land of the dead, or the sea of the dead, they are from the dead sea. But his daughter, Melancholia, she notices, and she is angry, angry like the sea and the dead.

(Sound of daughters singing songs that remind them of their fathers, who are not around as much as they wish.)

HE: (writing):

My hands grow extra thumbs, and they are all covered with the blood of this goddam war, this very goddam goddamed war. Generals disguised as insects come through the wounded gaping holes, and everyone who is not nailed down becomes entirely aroused. In the antechamber, there are women in leather with vampyr teeth, beating each other with whips made from living cat-tails, and pouring melted wax from silver chalices into their ears, and there is a song about the inquisition playing softly from the mouth of a dead walrus.

SHE (enters, drinking a miller, aghast. Here she is her own echo, but it doesn't really work.):

How, how, how. How will the wax stay melted, ted, ted, ted.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

HE:

How did you find me, how? I am a succubus, a sleepwalker, a pilgrim.

SHE:

How, how, how, how will the wax stay melted, ted, ted, ted.

HE:

I used to think that love was a feast, but now I see that it is only a light brunch, and some other tourist families already passed through, and ate all the good things.

SHE:

But, but, but, there is still a scone, scone, scone, scone.

(But oh, ho ho, there's more, because HE dies suddenly, because he is not writing anything interesting these days, and there is a MINOTAUR in his place. The MINOTAUR has an interesting head, shaved, of course — everyone's head is shaved in this — and he is wearing spectacular black leather boots.)

MINOTAUR:

How, how, how do you like my boots, boots, boots?

SHE:

Boots, boots, boots, a moron says what, says what, says what.

HE:

What?

SHE:

Hahaha, hahaha, hahaha.

(And tun-tun-tun, the devil's symphony starts to play, and it's a tango where the dancers wear live dogs for boots, clothes made of barbed wire, and hats made of bird claws. No one turns without drawing a little blood, but they're ready for it, because this is the dance of life, or death? Or else? Ooh.)

SHE (played by SHE, but differently, S(W), enters, and writes):

It is summer.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

It is not winter.	SHE:
She is not trapped.	SHE (W):
She is free.	SHE:
She is not out of options.	SHE (W):
She has options.	SHE:
She is not dead, she is not born.	SHE (W):
She is somewhere between birth and death.	SHE:
She is not suffocating.	SHE (W):
She is breathing.	SHE:
She is not alone.	SHE (W):
She is by herself.	SHE:
She is not alone.	SHE (W):
She is by herself.	SHE:
She is not not by herself.	SHE (W):
She is breathing.	SHE:

(And the tango becomes unexpectedly elegant, a poem about love that got lost between translations in a hundred

Appendix E: The Play Texts

imaginary flights between then and now.)

(End of surreal bit. Now back to the kitchen sink realism but wait did you see that? Did you see what just happened there? She and She got joined, like they were talking about being alone but they were talking about it together, like they were ghosts that got separated and now they are not this is important oh my gosh it might be very important mm hm.)

end of play/7-6

HE (confessing. Finally):

I think I'm in that movie where I'm the guy pulling the unhappy couple around in a rickshaw, the guy who talks dirty and goes to bachelor parties, and the woman who can pretend to be Marilyn Monroe, and I'm pulling them around in a rickshaw and she loves me secretly, and you think that would be enough. I wish my family were not all so sad, so very sad. I wish that I didn't have so many ghosts in my blood who understand what it is like to be Norma Jean on a bad day. I don't understand those bad days, my bad days are like Goya's bad days, and on my good days I am pulling her in the rickshaw and you think that would be plenty. Oh, but I do have plenty. Because we're all in a secret love affair with the moon, and some of us get to sleep with her sometimes.

DOG:

You don't need a degree to know that there's only one dream, and it's always about the moon, and tonight, the moon is looking at me, because I am so doggam hot. No one really understands me, not like I thought, because I am the incarnation of Doogie Hauser's long lost brother, Kaspar, and I am my own wooden horse. You all make no sense, you make no sense, your love makes no sense, I am going back to my only love, my only true love, my moon, my moon, my moon.

(This isn't quite a dream, but it's very close, especially if we are able to wake up their sympathetic sensibilities long enough to evoke a willing suspension of disbelief that would lead to a catharsis that would no doubt be so entirely sexual that it would feel as though the pelvis of the world were butting up against their secret spaces, except no one really gives in to that any more, not today, not with so many funny animal videos out there. Maybe that's sad, or maybe that's just where we are. But if we were not there, then it would be entirely sexual and everyone would be thanking us and we would say, no don't

Appendix E: The Play Texts

thank me, it wasn't me, it was you, or rather, us. We did that catharsis together, on this rainy afternoon of our lost youth when all the world was green. And we would surely notice how the dog is now dancing with the moon, and then eating the moon, because it's cheese, but we don't notice.)

HE:

I miss you.

SHE:

I don't think you mean me.

HE:

I don't think so, either, but I don't know who I'm supposed to tell this to.

SHE:

There are two moons, and one of them is made of cheese, and you have to eat the cheese moon before you get to the real moon, but after you eat the cheese moon, you need to take a very long nap, because that's too much cheese.

HE:

Oh, then we should go to sleep.

SHE:

You go first.

HE:

Oh, you go first.

SHE:

No, you go first.

HE:

No, you go first.

(They sleep under the cheese moon, which falls on them, and kills them. Woah. Oh my gosh.)

End of play

No. No. Aha. No.

aha ono
tuna play/after

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(Scene: It's one of those spectacularly stormy nights, dark, too, yes that, dark and stormy is exactly where this all starts.)

(Note: I don't really know where this is going.)

(He, recently back from the dead, a small and insignificant death, one that can't enter into his story as anything really important, but still, to him it moved through him like a kind of death; he, now covered in white cloth again from head to toe, is smoking insanely in the wind of the night, but inside his head it is cool. He, a magician back from wars that no one else could recognize, is less tired than worn, but has been learning how to gather things together that will help things in darker times, and these things are made of silver and copper and shine in the dark.)

(And just like it began the first time, this is enough to call in the mermaids and they come in singing.)

MERMAIDS:

Clock strikes upon the hour and the sun begins to fade.

(Oh, but it's so terribly tragic, so completely ridiculous, because it's obvious that they are not into the song, they haven't rehearsed, and it's embarrassing enough that they don't even try to go on, they just sit there angry and embarrassed like mermaids get.)

SHE3PO (now a shrink:)

It's always a shock to discover that none of these things, these systems and patterns and rhythms, none of them are reiterations of an original, it's a shock to discover that none of this is repetition. It's a rehearsal. This is not a repetition of what's some before, but a rehearsal for what has not happened yet. Even in rehearsal, however, there are first moments, which will come to stand as placeholders for originary moments, and the first moments will later be the fuel for nostalgia. For a not yet happened, this is a preparation for the derealization. The first moments are always the most important, because they construct the field for the future projections and reflections, except, except, the exception, which is always there, is that when the idea of origins becomes visible for what it is, impossible, then there is always a chance to go back and repeat, or

Appendix E: The Play Texts

rewrite, the origin. That is to say, in flexible realms of identity, the origin is flexible so that, if one decides to populate the beginning with one's favorite things, like mermaids and fairy tales about hair and dogs and so forth and so on, there is a distinct possibility that one will of course miss the chance because of the blush and the rush of falling in love, but there are fissures in the unwinding present into the future where one can go back and rewrite, and the problem, the central problem, when one keeps rewriting, is not something that comes from guilt or regret, but its opposite, a projection into a future that has not been written, because it has not begun yet, because it is not here yet. So even though we may want to leave everything on the curb, crying in the rain, there is an uneasiness that suggests this is not the end of the story, because the story still hasn't even started yet, even though we are speaking, we haven't spoken it yet, because our mouths are too far away from each other.

(Meanwhile, in another part of the world
there is the DOG.)

DOG:

This is the story of a dog. And end of play.

End of play.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

4. Hotel Athena MOTS4

PART ONE

CONCIERGE:

Good morning, or evening where you just were, is the jet leg all right? It's never all right, the funny thing is, this is always funny to me, anyway, the funniest thing is, you won't remember most of this. It's like when you take a nap, for like two hours, long enough to get rested, you know, but just a little bit too long, you know, so you don't feel awake at all quite, you know, like every muscle is heavy and you're trying to get you know you're trying to, you know, you're trying so hard to wake up, and it takes so, so long, and you just need a little more time, but here you are.

(Laughs)

Well. I'm happy you're here at least. I mean, we are all of course happy you are here, but I'm going to be the only one who shows it, because you know how people are here, it's the culture, they just don't warm up very quickly, or you know warm up just enough to make you confused that there's something wonderful about this whole place but then they shut down, you hit a wall, you hit a wall between pockets of heat, and the walls are ice, and right now, let's just say you're in a wall of ice. You've gotten so far, but you can't get further, like there are depths here that are not accessible to you, but it seems like everyone else knows the way in. I'm going to tell you a secret. They don't know, they're not in, and in fact, they are more trapped than you are, even though to you, ha, well, they're at least locals, they at least speak the language, they must feel at home here, because this is their home. The secret, they don't, they don't feel at home, but the worst part is that we're all nervous that it's going to get much worse.

(Laughs.)

It doesn't get worse, by the way, this is as bad as it's going to get, but knowing that it doesn't get worse doesn't make the nervousness go away, not at all. I'm so glad you're here. And I'm really really sorry about the break up. I think she's here, actually, but I don't know if she wants to talk to you, I would be surprised if she didn't, or I might mean the opposite of that, I'm just, I'm just telling you, I'm just warning you, in case you're not ready, in case you're not ready to see her, you're going to see her. If you're not ready to see her yet, well, you know. Sorry. You're going to see her. In the meantime, if there are any questions at all. If you need to talk, you know. Please find me, please come and find me if you need to talk to someone, I'd like to be someone who listens.

THIS NEXT SECTION IS A VIDEO THAT IS OF A PARTY IN A HOTEL ROOM, THERE ARE TWO BIG CONVERSATIONS THAT THE CAMERA WILL SHOW, AND THEN THE LAST REVEAL OF ATHENA.

1.

LIANA:

What did she do?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SETH:

She said no.

LIANA:

Why?

SETH:

I don't know.

LIANA:

That's weird.

SETH:

I think so too. I mean, thought so, but now.

LIANA:

Doesn't matter.

SETH:

It really doesn't.

2.

BETH:

You were where?

JAMIE:

A club.

BETHANNE:

The same one.

BETH:

I can't, I don't think, I don't believe you. You always say things like that, and they never refer to anything in particular, I think you are very very confused.

BETHANNE:

When she walked up to me, I really didn't recognize her.

JAMIE:

What was different?

BETHANNE:

Nothing was different, that's why I didn't recognize her, she looked like she looks when she shows herself to me, only she's never done that, you know, in front of other people, so it was surprising.

JAMIE:

Because why.

BETHANNE:

Because of context.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

JAMIE:

I don't know what you mean.

BETHANNE:

She was, oh, how do you, what's the word, when something isn't where it's supposed to be.

BETH:

I think the word for that is you.

(They all laugh.)

BETHANNE:

No, no, no. like, like it, like it doesn't belong. It's right in a certain context, but in another context, it doesn't belong.

BETH:

I don't think there's a word for that.

BETHANNE:

I am positive that there is. Positive.

3.

ATHENA:

(staring full into the camera, she is in the background of a crowd shot, the crowd is moving and she is not, she is standing staring into the camera)

I've already grabbed most of my things so I'm, oh, you know. I can't say everything, I would like to, if I could, I just can't tell you everything. This. This was important. You have no idea, but, you know, I'm...you've been so so much, I just, I have to go, listen, I—

(Her phone goes off. pause, she smiles apologetically.)

I have to...

(She picks up the phone, another quick smile at the camera then turns and leaves, talking on the phone.)

Hello, I'm here.

(Laughs.)

VIDEO

WHAT'S THE VIDEO OF? IT'S OF NOSTALGIA OF COURSE.

IN THESE VIDEOS, IN SECTION ONE, THERE ARE VIDEOS OF THE BANANA DANCE, INTERSPERSED WITH SILENT VIDEOS WITH SUBTITLES WHERE I ASK YOU ALL YOU ALL PERFORMERS YES YOU TO TALK ABOUT LOSING THE THREAD, AND YOU WOULD ANSWER, BUT HERE IN THESE VIDEOS WE CAN'T HEAR YOU BUT THERE'S SUBTITLES

Appendix E: The Play Texts

OVER THESE VIDEOS WE HAVE THESE VOICE OVERS OF HE TALKING, AND HERE, HE IS BOYD.

HE:

This is not meant to be insulting, but you are replaceable and so am I. So are a lot of the human characters in this. We are all looking for her – some of us have a tragic and poetic capacity to get her confused with a specific human being. The ones who are lucky know that no one of us can contain her for very long. She is outside of us. And she is inside of us. And she has that air of eternity about her, but she is not always here. She can and will turn her back on any one or all of us, and to find her, you have to have a mirror inside your heart, the holds the reflection of a lit candle, I can't talk about that in any more detail, I can't talk about that. But further, you have to be on, you have to be turned on, and she has to be looking for you, too. For the lucky ones, it only happens once in a lifetime (but no one really knows anyone like this, not directly, it's always the friend of a friend – or, if someone claims, 'No, it's true, it happened to me – I fell in love with him and I've never fallen out of love and never noticed anyone else' – then they are lying, or they are exaggerating, or they are boring). For the lucky ones, it happens two or three times in a life. For the lucky ones, it happens over and over again. For the lucky ones, it happens.

For the ones who are looking, this is all of us – let me explain why we are replaceable. I had a friend, and we would meet once a month. Coffee and cigarettes and conversations about a Certain Her – she always had a different name – we didn't always realize that she was the same one, regardless of the name, in fact, we rarely realized it, and still rarely realize this. He and I, we don't meet so often anymore, but in every city I meet another him, and we keep having the conversations, and they're always the same conversations, and for me, it never gets old. Any time there are two of us, any combination of genders, meeting, to talk about this certain her, we are all having the same conversation.

So I am replaceable too. But she, she is not. She is that golden flower, a purple or a red orchid, any color rose, sometimes a lotus, and to all of us, she is everything we ever wanted.

(Scene: a bar. Bright sparkly lights in an otherwise very dark place. Clinking glasses, music about repetition in the background. In this place, 3 people give these monologues simultaneously, a secret bar confession that everyone can overhear.)

JAMIE:

When the circle became the square, we went from being born to dying. There was one day, it was summer I remember, it was in the middle of the war I remember, it was the last thing I remember, all the things, the things we were warming, pies in the oven, the sun on the skin, the clay in our hands, all the things, there was a turn, from warm to hot to burning to ash, that turn, we all took

Appendix E: The Play Texts

the turn together and braced ourselves against the curve together, and damn honey is still sweet. There's hope. There is that school of knowledge that tells us, if we listen, I wouldn't listen if I were you, there's a school of thought that says, and we don't listen, it says that this organ is related to this color, etc., etc., but more, there's more to it. A part of the world, to something in the world, not like in, you know, how they draw the lines, those lines everywhere, it's hard to see, it doesn't matter, but for the kinds of places there are. There's a word for this. What the weather is like there. Something along those lines. If you're going to be here for any length of time, you should try this. It helps. Everyone here, those who come back, come back for this, because it reminds them of me. I don't remember, but I have something in me that makes people reminded, I make them remember, so I've heard. Your body remembers things, remembers places. Your body remembers places even when they are new. Because you have been lost. You have been lost in the thread. You lost, you lost the thread to the mother, and that's your problem. But your body remembers the secret, and you might remember the secret, that this is, of course, haunted.

BETH:

The lines on the palms of your hand, those circles, this begins there, at the center, you can't find the center, you don't need to find the center, but you need to know the center is there. I know. Because I was there. I was there, and I was told not to go there, I was told that if you go there, you won't come back, but I didn't listen, I didn't listen and I was there, and I almost didn't make it back. But I came back. And I know, I know why we fight, I know why we fight, and I know why we stop fighting. We stop fighting because we come back. I came back to tell you, I came back to tell you how to stop, how to stop fighting, you're not going to fight your way out, your way out is something else, something else will occur to you. To you. Is how it happened to me. To me, I am lost when I fight, when I try to fight my way out. We're the same. We're the same breath on the same cloth, the same cloth that holds this together, we're the same. The same. You don't believe me. I'll show you. You don't trust me. I'll show you. You'll know, you'll know the same things I know, I know how to find the center, how to come back, you'll know. You lost the thread to the mother, that's your problem. Same thing happened to me. And what happens after? Devastating.

BETHANNE:

The rough beginning that works, that makes the square spin, until its corners disintegrate, it crumbles, old cement, is a circle again, whole again, a hole again, a holy disintegration, the corners hide in their proper corners, this rough beginning comes, comes once in a lifetime but comes every lifetime, and when it comes, it is falling, it is falling backwards, being blown backwards, everything is familiar and out of order, it is falling, and there's no map, but there's the line, there is time on a line, time on a line in space, there's a word for that, I can't remember the word, it's in your hand. The line in your hand, you remember, part of a longer thread, and when you lost the thread, you lost the thread to the mother, and that's your problem, but you're lucky, because you're holy, because you're a secret, you're the cave under the sea, because here, this, here, here, this here, is haunted, this is haunted, the ghosts here utterly lost, utterly charming, utterly split from the thread, just like you, but you, you, you come back. The words you utter, connect to the thread, you are connected to the things you lost, utterly, chasing ghosts, and you're about to find them utterly charming.

VIDEO

HE:

Even though this was the moment of the series of moments that taught me not to trust the narrator, they did not teach me how. You have been there. In fact, just one year ago, I met you here in this cafe, and this is not exactly what we were talking about, but if you recall, this is the same conclusion we were coming to.

So.

I wish you were here.

Because I lost track of you, and I miss our talks, because they were the only things that made sense to me, every time I lost her. And between us, we've lost her a lot. And you're the only one who ever understood me. It's better to say these things out loud. Because this really is Freud's playground. I can talk about my mother, about how every conversation with my mother turns into this one – we talk about how wisdom cannot live inside words, but, she says, 'There is an energy inside the words that we cannot speak, and that's why we always say them out loud, in case they might break open and the energy is released, so that we are free to enter into the spell.' And when she spoke those words, it was as if she had stolen them from you.

But my mother is different than most. She is not complete, she is becoming. That is rare in anyone of her generation, and it takes years of practice and cultivation, you have to keep a crack in the mold so that any completion is never really complete. She is becoming, just like we are, and looking for the same thing.

That confirmation that we are not just crawling but have learned how to walk.

We need this, we need to have this, this conversation, for every time that we change forms.

BETH:

You go over it all, again and again, how it goes, how it goes, you go over that moment, over and over, the last important moment, go over it and go back, and go backwards, the moment before that, you work your way back, you keep going back, you have to go back, you're being pulled back, every moment, over and over and again and again, and then, you land, the moment you tasted fire the first time, you're back at the first kiss for the first time. You can't remember the conversation that lead up to it, but. You remember how you were trying to pay attention to the conversation, but. You were waiting for the conversation to take a turn, but you can't remember, you can't can't can't remember the turn, you remember the kiss the first kiss the first time kiss, but you can't remember the turn.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

(CONCIERGE takes them to 3 different rooms, where they sit and wait.)

CONCIERGE:

You'll be comfortable here, but I hope not for too long. Haha. Really, you can't rest for too long, although you might like to, I don't blame you, after all you've been through, you need a rest. But there is that itinerary, and we have a lot of ground to cover. Just relax. If you need water, or a biscuit, help yourself, we have, well, we're offering water and biscuits. The restaurant is very good, but it's closed. Not for too long, though.

ROOM 1:

(SETH enters.)

SETH:

You know I've been through this before. Not that this is that, it's not the same, I know, this was totally different, because of course it always is, but really. What I want to tell you. The same advice you gave me. Get on with it. Take off your self, your old self, like skin, or like a suit, taking off your skin sounds creepy, take off that suit that is you, so that you will see that the suit was you, and leave it behind. Leave it behind for the maids to deal with. You don't need it anymore.

(Pause, he is happy.)

Oh, but it's really hard. It's really, really hard to do that. But you can do it. That's what you should do. But it's really hard. Things will come back to you, but just tell yourself, this is just a memory and it's not me. And keep going.

ROOM 2:

(LIANA enters.)

LIANA:

I know this is all pretty new, and pretty rough. Nothing much is worse, and I can only think of a few things. But in all the things where you end up still alive, with most of your heart intact, this is the worst, and I know it doesn't feel like that right now, but. The best advice I can give you, take time. You don't have to get on with it. Not right away. Think of it like, eventually, you're going to shed your skin, eventually. But not yet. First, you have to spend time in it, live in the memory of everything that happened, inhabit it. Be the ghost. Every great love story has a ghost, right? Be that. Be that ghost.

(Pause, she is happy.)

Oh, but it won't be easy. It won't be easy at all, because you'll want to get attached, but you can't, you're a ghost, you can't hold anything in your hands. Let yourself get caught up in the memory like you're under the sea, drowning, and don't get attached.

ROOM 3:

(CONCIERGE enters.)

CONCIERGE:

Ok, I didn't really leave, I mean, I can't leave you like this. Everyone will tell you things, get on with it, or take your time to get over it, but all of the advice anyone

Appendix E: The Play Texts

will give you is wrong. When you lose something like that, you don't get over it. I should know. Become, aha, this is my advice to you. Become the tourist of your own love story. Like a ghost almost. You're a tourist, you have no connection to this, nothing at all, and you're walking through a tourist attraction.

(Pause, he is happy.)

Oh, but don't take pictures. Really. That's a bad idea. Because you don't know who is a ghost here and who is not a ghost, and that would be distracting, because people will react, you know, how they react, and ghosts, with cameras? Yikes.

JAMIE:

A history of forgetting, part one:

First thing that you lose is your sense of touch.

That's why we say out of touch.

Your skin, when it stops, when it finally stops talking, talking back and forth between you and the rest of the world, your skin tells you what you don't want to tell yourself.

That you're done with this.

That you're cutting off contact, that you're not contacting, that you don't want contact with this, with this world.

End of conversation.

BETHANNE:

Then you will lose everything, all that you love will be ripped away from you.

All of those things that you love, you will want to draw them closer and closer.

The things you loved to see, the pretty shiny things, they start to look dull, and all the colors start to fade, and even the music in your heart starts to sound out of tune.

That's when everything turns.

The things that were sweet, they will no longer mean anything to you, they won't hold a secret, it will be like reading a book you've already read a hundred times, and you don't need to read it again, you are no longer hungry.

The people who comfort you, the animals who comfort you, the spirits that comfort you, they will disappear, and your heart will live on the outside of your body, and you will enter the world of phantoms, and in this world of phantoms, you will feel terrified that you feel so much at home.

VIDEO

WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF YOU HAD STAYED IN THE ROOM?

HE:

It was somewhere around here, not this exact neighborhood, but close, where I came to two conclusions: I would never stop looking for her, and I would never understand her.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

I remember exactly where I was when I understood this. I don't know why these things are important to me, tracing the geography of thought – whether it happened here or there should be irrelevant, except it is really not. There are some kinds of thought that need interruptions in order that they can find their way into your body. I know I am saying thought, but I don't mean in connection to the mind, I really do mean the body, I really am not talking about anything else.

And for me, for us, I think because I know you a little bit by now, or fairly well by now, for us, the most important thoughts we can have can't happen close to home, we have to be interrupted somewhere else, somewhere far away from home, somewhere not at home at all.

When I am far away, I miss some things at first. The look of traffic lights. The sound of the sirens. The peculiarities of faucets. And certain things that have to do with food. Of course, the language, there's the language at first. But only at first. I only miss the language at first. Something happens when you stop living in your mother tongue, or at least when you stop inhabiting it in the same way, something happens to you when you are not as sure that you will be understood. So many things you think you will miss for so long are things you hardly miss at all. The people, however. I never stop missing the people. And it's very hard when you are far away from ones you love, where there is also a death, when there is a recent death, a death of someone close to you all. Because, you start to see, that no matter how long, or how deep you are into your grieving, you recognize that you have not really been grieving, because you have been telling yourself that they are not gone, not gone at all, just far away. Except. When there are loved ones, loved ones in the equation, who are far away, really far away, not dead and far away, it starts to sink in, maybe for the first time even, that the dead are really gone.

That can't be helped.

But these other things. Not the food, the signs, the smells in the street, you stop missing those soon enough, they get unmissed very quickly.

It always helps to fall in love with the city you are now in.

The more unfamiliar the city is, the longer it takes to fall in love, but when you do fall, it's deeper. And eventually, you fall. You always fall eventually.

And there, in that space, in that exact geographical space, is when your thinking becomes your closest friend. The attachments to the every day things of your life are gone, and your attachment to your life is gone, and you start to see it, as clear as water in the stream when the sun is rising, you can see it. You have escaped, and you are free to think about how you have escaped. And you start to think about the ways that you can keep yourself from getting tangled up again.

That's where I was, close to here, far from her, and I could see all the wires, all the knots, all the ribbons, that tied me to there, and I could see exactly how and when to cut them all.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

And I saw, at that moment, that she could never be cut from me, and I could never be cut from her, because although it felt far from her, it was not, it was not far at all, she was right here with me. I wish I could say, then, that we are inseparable, inseparable in that way, in that way that soft summer light is inseparable from the thing it shines on, but this is not that. It's something else. I don't understand what this is, but I suspect that it happens to every single one of us.

(I don't know where this happens but it has to happen there again, but not yet, because first this scene below is happening there. I don't know where, though.)

LIANA:

Your problem is, you're stuck in time.

SETH:

Didn't you say that already?

LIANA:

You live in the past.

SETH:

That's a bad thing.

LIANA:

I'd give anything to live in the past, but I can't get there.

SETH:

I can't get away from there.

LIANA:

If I could switch places with you—

SETH:

—Since you can't, then we'll just have to talk to each other, for a very long time, until maybe we start to see what it's like from each other's perspective.

LIANA:

That sounds nice.

SETH:

It is nice. And maybe, it'll be like, something like. You, blown backward into the future, me, blown forward into the past, we run into each other, but we run into each other really hard, so hard it stops time.

LIANA:

Time is a river, flowing in all directions.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SETH:

Right. I can't get away from there.

LIANA:

Uh-huh.

SETH:

So I know exactly how you feel.

LIANA:

No, you don't, you really don't, and you can't. It's not the same, it's the opposite direction, we live in opposite directions, but you have a choice.

SETH:

That's not true. If you lived through what I lived through.

LIANA:

How?

SETH:

Everyone thinks they meet the love of their life, but hardly anyone ever does, really. I lost it, it was in my hands, and I lost it, and I know it was the real thing, and that's why I live where I live.

LIANA:

I think that happens to everyone.

SETH:

I doubt that.

LIANA:

Well, I don't live the same as you, so I don't know for sure—

SETH:

—Right.

LIANA:

But. Everyone I ever met anywhere has had the same experience that you have had. Everyone loses someone important.

SETH:

But not like this.

LIANA:

Ok, whatever.

SETH:

I know things, I had things told to me, whispered to me, under the cover of the ocean, I was told things about this, and why it was the tragedy that would keep the world spinning.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

LIANA:

Mermaids are liars.

SETH:

Anyway, it doesn't matter if you believe me or not, I know it's true. And that's why I have to live in the past, because there's a clue there, there's something that happened there, and if I go back over the same scene, over and over, enough times, I will see the thing I am supposed to see, and everything will be revealed, and I'll have everything in the world that I ever wanted.

LIANA:

That sounds nice.

SETH:

It is.

LIANA:

It might also be nice if you had everything in the world you ever wanted right now, but you were too dumb to figure it out.

SETH:

It would be nice if I were dumb.

LIANA:

Maybe it is nice.

SETH:

Ok, I lost the thread here. What would be nice.

LIANA:

This. This. This. This would be nice.

SETH:

If I were dumb.

LIANA:

If you were dumb.

SETH:

But I'm not dumb.

LIANA:

Too bad.

1st dance break – only the men, dancing and singing karaoke by themselves.
The Final Countdown, by Europe.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

VIDEO

HE:

Maybe you have been there. You're young and you're not a teenager yet even, and something happens inside of you, someone turns your head and turns you other. Someone turns you other. Your parents, or your friends, or someone, someone sees you like this, and they give you that nod, that smiling nod that they have, someone older who understands, who thinks they understand. They see you like this, turned, and they smile and they nod, and they talk about how they remember that summer light love, green grass and yellow flowers, but. You know this isn't that. This isn't that at all. You know that now and you knew that then, this, this turning, this, is something else. The grass it makes you itch and the flowers, they are sticky, covered with bees, and you are no longer what you were once, you are no longer anonymous, you are not invisible, you are revealed, you have been revealed and you will never be the same. That's how it always was with her and I.

(At the end of this video, it glitches, and then she appears, like she just recorded over it at the end.)

ATHENA:

We missed it. This has to keep happening again, because we missed it. I can't tell you, I can't say, I really can't say what I want to say, this is close, but it's wrong. But it's close.

Before, before I met you, I knew I would meet you and I knew that it would unfold, and when it unfolded, it would curl up, it would curl up in the sun, and disintegrate, and blow away in all directions, in order that it could keep happening. It repeats. That's not up to me. But. There was one time, somewhere at the start, I was dancing and you were watching and when you saw me, you saw me. And later that night, we were on a roof, and I swore I could see something I never saw before, and the subject changed, something happened, something interrupted us, something like a first kiss, maybe a first kiss. I saw, this is what I saw, I saw so far, I could see for the first time what it might be like to be seen, to be visible. I can't say what I want to say. I can't say it. This is close but it's wrong.

(Blows a kiss to the camera.)

PART TWO

CONCIERGE:

What are you doing? You have to go, you're supposed to be — look at the schedule. You did get a schedule, didn't you? Come with me, we're already late.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

VIDEO

IN THE VIDEOS IN PART TWO, BACKWARD AND FORWARD WITH THE BANANA DANCE, WITH FILM DEGRADING AND DISINTEGRATING

SHE/V.O. OF BETH:

Something out of our childhood that we swore we would never forget – something we saw out of the corner of our eye and made us feel a rush of something we couldn't put into words – seeing something strange suddenly remembered – hard to describe at the moment but we promised ourselves we would never forget. We woke up looking, looking for that.

So. If you die before me, then I will have to promise you I will find it, I will find it and if not marry it then at least figure out how to put it into words. And if but if but if I go first, you're going to have to help me. I would do the same for you.

HER

(Simultaneous JAMIE, BETH, BETHANNE. She is at a sink washing her face in a basin, something uncomfortable just happened, a line just got crossed):

I know you're upset, we all know you're upset. Everyone goes a little crazy when they're where you are. Except. Oh. Did you hear that? I said, they're where you are. I said, everyone. Did you hear that? I said everyone. I said everyone. That should tell you something important. We have all been where you are, or everyone has been, or will be, where you are. But you, sir, will never be where I am, until you get something straight. Your contraptions, all of them, have to be taken apart, and left on the floor, for a very long time, before anyone can try to put them together again. They have to be taken apart and left lying around, long enough so that the important parts, the ones that make the whole thing work, are scattered and lost. You know why. You're here, a ghost of who you once were, like everyone here, we're all ghosts. You come here to take yourself apart, because you have been so wronged, something like that. She said blabla to you and you were thinking oh yes and she says blabla and then in a while, a month or a week or something, something happens, it wasn't true, she told you something and you believed her, something like that. Is what usually happens. I mean, that's a version of what happens, it's always the same thing that happens. Nothing else happens here. That's the thing that happens here. It's what happens everywhere, you'll see it everywhere, if what I'm talking about is what happened to you. But. Underneath that story is the story of how you are wrong, how you are not telling the truth to anyone, how you are in a love story, but you are not who you think you are. You're playing your role one way and there's another way to play it, it's not, I'm not saying the other way is better. Actually, I am. I really am. There's a better way to play the role you think you are playing, but you have to stop right now, with this, you don't even know what this is. You think you're just observing and trying to make sense about everything that happened to you, but you are committing and act of intention that you are unaware of, and you, sir, very lucky

Appendix E: The Play Texts

today, sir. You are. We will help. We will help you. We will help you become someone else. Become someone else. This time, with feeling.

CONCIERGE:

I need you to follow me, but hold on one moment.

(Stops and looks at map.)

This is a little embarrassing.

(Keeps looking.)

I see the schedule, and I see the place listed, and I even see it on the map, but there's something wrong with the directions, I know you can't get there by going this way, because, well. Look. There's a wall. You see that wall? It's not just me who sees a wall there, we all can agree we see a wall. Well, that's not supposed to be there. It wasn't there when we made the itinerary for you, so hold on. Let me make a phone call, hold on. Please just wait and please be quiet.

(Makes a phone call.)

Hello? It's me, listen. I'm lost. This has never happened to me before, but I really don't...no. No. No, it doesn't happen all the time, this is new. Well, sure, I get caught up in things, and my sense of direction gets interestingly complex, but this isn't like that, this is lost. There was something, there was a turn, we were supposed to be something that we're not yet, we were supposed to take a turn, and become something else, and that hasn't happened yet, we missed the turn. The circle becomes a square, and you know, you know how I get. No, I don't think we have to go back to the mind body distinction. I think it goes back much much further. Well, I can see on the map here, it looks like, here. I see this point here, when we went from being hunter-gatherers to something else, something that settled, and, do you remember that? That was fun. At the beginning, that was fun, right? And then, I don't know if it happened to you, but it happened to me, I forgot to see the mystery in things, and started to see the secret codes in things, the codes that kept things contained, and I got those codes confused with the mystery and thought the whole thing was solved. Remember that? That was when we stopped hearing plants speak. Remember that? We need to go back there.

(Off phone.)

We need to turn around and go back.

BETHANNE:

You are in a place that is filled with monsters.

You're surrounded by beautiful monsters.

You're a beautiful monster.

You pass through this place of beautiful monsters by recognizing yourself in these beautiful monsters.

You pass through by not getting attached to any of your forms.

Every form that you see here is a version of you.

Don't get attached.

You are all of these and none of these.

Don't be afraid, don't be attached, don't take anything with you.

No souvenirs. And no maps.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

Your heart is a jewel. Your mind is a jewel.

Your eye is a jewel, sees through the veil, sees through the veil of this world, you see through the veil of this world.

(HOTEL ROOM.)

SETH:

(Comes out of the bathroom, brushing his teeth):

I missed you, too. You do know that you're a ghost, right? Hold on, sorry.

(Exits, spits and rinses, comes back.)

Not that it matters all that much. Most of us go around not realizing that we're ghosts, and things seem to be moving along, mm, not exactly fine, perfectly fine, but they move. The most important things start to happen though, when you wake up and remember that you are a ghost. This is how it happened to me. Remember that woman I was telling you about? It was the same woman you were telling me about. You know what I found out? She's a ghost. And at first, I was like all, oh my gosh we always had so much in common and this is one more thing, how could I lose her, wah, wah, wah, like that, you know, but then it suddenly occurred to me, it suddenly occurred to me, that the reason we all keep occurring to each other like this, around this one thing, I mean, there's a reason obviously, right? Because it keeps happening in this same circle, right? We keep occurring to each other until we remember that we are always recurring to each other, because this, this, this, not because this needs to be settled. It can't be settled. But it keeps unsettling us, because, not because of the circularity of the situation. Wait. Let me try to explain this. I just figured this out and it's important. It is because of the circularity of the situation. But it has nothing to do with the situation, per se, but has everything to do with the circularity. Because we are supposed to remember the circularity. Why? Why you might ask? That's what I asked, why? Why the circularity, why are we supposed to pay attention to that? Because the circularity is a circle. Aha! Do you see? Do you see? You don't see. When we remember we're in a circle, we remember that things keep going around again, and when we get to the point we were at the last time, we remember that we were here the last time, and we have the opportunity to do something entirely different than the last time. Oh my god the banana dance! Let's go.

DANCE BREAK

HEATHER IN THE CENTER DOES THE BANANA DANCE

JAMIE:

A history of forgetting, unforgettable forgetting.

Part B.

A was touch and B is also touch.

No, that's wrong.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

It's smell. This is smell. Losing your sense of smell.
When you lose touch, you can still find your way around all of this by your sense of smell, it's where your memory lives.
The best thing that ever happened to me was losing my sense of smell.
Because that's when you really forget.
You get dropped into the cold black sea.
You get erased.
You lose:
The smell of oranges that might remind you of a lost love.
The smell of wood, that might remind you of a lost love.
The smell of smoke, that might remind you of a lost love.
You get to live in that place, and you get to know
the secrets that only birds and fish know.
Just like old times.

(This scene happens in the same place
as the last scene that was here took
place. I'm not sure where that is.)

LIANA:
Your problem is that you're stuck in time.

SETH:
I was just about to say the same thing to you.

LIANA:
It's different. If I could move backwards, I would, but there's just no way.

SETH:
That wind.

LIANA:
Yes, blowing me forward.

SETH:
It sounds fun.

LIANA:
It's not.

SETH:
I bet if you just looked at it differently, you might see it as fun.

LIANA:
I wouldn't.

SETH:
It's like a ride.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

LIANA:

History is a ride. We all get swung around in all directions, all the time. But you, you're here, your anchor is here, and you can always go back to here. I don't. My anchor is back there, and I can never touch it again.

SETH:

Then why do you even try?

LIANA:

Because that's how I'm built, it's like gravity, it pulls me back, but I can't ever reach it.

SETH:

Because of the wind.

LIANA:

Exactly.

SETH:

That's just physics. That's just your peculiar physics. I have my own, a physics that keeps me stuck.

LIANA:

But this is where we're different. You're here. If you're here, you can see things, you can see things in all directions, but you won't look.

SETH:

I don't think I can.

LIANA:

You can. You can look at everything from all directions, and you would know where things are going, and where things have been, and you would know why you are right here.

SETH:

I don't agree, I can't see a thing, and if I could get out of my head, I would.

LIANA:

You could, you just won't take it, because if you did.

SETH:

Don't.

LIANA:

You would see everything you've done.

SETH:

Don't.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

LIANA:

And that what you've done is part of something that's already been under way for a very long time.

SETH:

Please don't.

LIANA:

That you're one, one, just one, in a tidal wave, a tidal wave that started a very long time ago, and you would know that you have to stop it, but you can't stop it, it's too big, and if you did try to stop it, it would run you over, turn you inside out, and destroy you from the inside out.

SETH:

I don't think I would like that.

LIANA:

Because you would die.

SETH:

Probably.

LIANA:

But after that, sometime after that, you would get born from the ashes, something else, something that knows things, something that knows how to stop things.

SETH:

Yeah, I wouldn't like that.

LIANA:

You all started this, so you're the ones that have to stop this.

SETH:

That's crazy.

LIANA:

Just because I'm telling you something that you already know.

BETH:

You put together that you here are the one here who is not here. You lost yourself here. You came here and then you were not here any longer. You remember how you were here and then you were not. And it was like death. You put yourself together when you remember death. It was just like birth. It was just like what happens next. Something always happens next. Don't forget.

(Pause.)

Let's say, this isn't true and it's not false either, let's just say, this was your fault. You lost yourself, and that's what messed this up. That's when everything turned inside out. Let's say that was all you. And let's say that's exactly what you were supposed to do. Your story is a love story. Your story started as a love story. Before

Appendix E: The Play Texts

you were born. There was a love story before you were born. You remember the story, you don't remember, you remember your love story, you don't remember. What you know, what you remember, doesn't matter, it started, it was a love story. Your love story, your story, your story is your love story, and your story starts in the middle of the love story that lead up to your birth.

(Pause.)

Your story. Let's go back, let's go back, back there, back already there, let's go back. The love story that lead up to your birth, what happened? You remember, you don't remember, you remember, what happened next? You happened next. You're the love story that happened next.

CONCIERGE:

If you go far enough back, you find the place, you unlock the lock, the place where everything moves forward. I've been there. I've been there before, and that's as far as I got. But you, you have a chance, you have a key, you don't know what it is yet, but you have a key. My problem, and this has been your problem, so I might mean our problem, our problem is our materiality. Wanting the solid flesh to melt. But it's not a body problem. It's not a problem with the body, it's how we think about the body, how we think we are this thing, this flesh that's been scarred, and we carry this scarred flesh with us, and we think of this flesh as something we care for, rather than the thing that cares for us. So you have to stop thinking about it this way. I don't know how you do it. I couldn't do it. I tried, but I could never do it. Become a ghost. Intellectually, I get it, I'm a phantom, blabla, we're ephemeral, blabla, but this is something else. When your body tells your mind to shut up, I got this, the body says, I'm a ghost I got this, shut up, and the only thing left to do, this is the key, is to trust your body's desire, is to let your body become what it desires. In other words: you're going to have to stop being who you think you are and become the one you lost, the one you miss, you're going to have to dance, you, are going, to have to, dance. Uh-huh.

VIDEO

SHE/V.O. BETHANNE:

Somewhere, in the middle of it, you are spinning upside down, spinning at the end of a line at the end of a web, you are caught and you are upside down, spinning, and everything you love, everything that is dear to you, everything is being ripped away from you, they all fly by you, so fast you are not sure what this is, you might be dying. You are inside out, you might be dying. And you don't have your wits, this is not the day to consider the soundness of a new investment opportunity, you might be dying, and even in the middle of this, something gives you the wherewithal, it doesn't even come from you maybe? it's not you making the decision maybe? you are out of other options maybe? you decide, you have been decided, you will become someone else.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

VIDEO

Boyd dressed like Heather does the banana dance.

LIANA:

You made it.
I didn't think you'd make it.
You made it.
I don't think you'll hear the dead singing for much longer.

PART THREE

CONCEIRGE:

Hahaha, you made it, you really made it, this is fantastic because you made it, no one thought that you would be able, I mean, no one, no one thought you could do it, but just look at you, you made it, just look at you. At the end and at the beginning of the world, there is cake. Here is some cake. Have some cake. I can't tell you if it's the end or the beginning, all I can tell you for sure is that there is cake. Please enjoy this cake, and then you can go to the next place, please go to the next place, first, have some cake, take it with you, we're all very very surprised and very very happy that you made it. This is it. This is really happening. This is happening for real. This. It's happening. With cake.

BETH:

You remember that the beginning of the world, after the loud part, after the crashing loud thundering thumping volcano from the center of everything exploding part, was soft, do you remember that? There was a feeling that the surround around you was taking a very long breath, and the surround surrounding you was exhaling a very long breath, and the dark, endless sky started to streak with pink and blue. You remember that you were taking a very long breath, and then you were exhaling a very long breath, and you were the same breath, you were breathing the breath of the surround, and your eyes saw streaks of pink and blue.

A MOVIE THEATRE FOR THE Dead

FILM ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED SO FAR, WITH SUBTITLES.
THE ONLY THING WE HEAR THROUGH THIS, A REPETITION, THIS:
Why are the dead still singing? Why do I still hear the dead singing?

Appendix E: The Play Texts

JAMIE:

A history of forgetfulness, part four.
The last thing you lose is your hearing.
That's last.
Why is hearing the last?
You know why hearing is the last.
You hear before you learn to speak, and you hear after you stop speaking.
You get sung awake, and you get sung back to sleep.
Do you know the ocean sings you to sleep?
Do you know your blood is an ocean that sings?
Do you know that your love story isn't over as long as someone is talking about you?
Do you know that you're going to keep listening as long as someone is talking about you?
Do you know that the woman who sang to you when you were born is not your mother?
That you heard her before?
That you hear her again, at the end of all of this?
Do you know that your favorite song is my favorite song?
Do you know that I already forgot the words?

VIDEO

THE VIDEOS IN SECTION THREE ARE ALL EARTH IMAGES, SHADOW AND LIGHT IMAGES, WITH SHADOWS OF HUMAN FIGURES IN THE FRAME SOMEWHERE.

OH AND IN A COUPLE OF PLACES, PUT A BANANA PEEL OR TWO. LIKE CUZ THERE'S NO BANANA DANCE HERE IN THIS SECTION AND WE HAVE TO REMEMBER THE BANANA DANCE, PEOPLE!! Hello!!

HER/V.O. BETHANNE:

The mothers. here come the mothers, you drink the mothers, you eat the mothers, you never stop, do you see them? Do you hear them? This is what they say. They say, You would think we are used to your question. This is your question:

Every time? Every time it happens again and I am stripped and lost in the dark and it takes so long, so long to come to, and when I come to, and find my way around, it's just like last time, and that doesn't help, the air is too thick, the air won't let me pass, and I have to move, and everything is against me, and it's like this again, every time, every time, does this have to happen every time?

I suppose we are surprised as you are at the repetition. Is what the mothers say. But that is what repetition is, the mothers say. Every time, is what the mothers say.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

VIDEO

HER/V.O. JAMIE:

This was constructed with quick drying cement, the cracks were filled in with quick drying cement — they had to justify their own habits of mass homicide, and so they built these complex philosophical systems on their rationalizations—that's where we get the rational era from, the enlightened thing from, that's where that comes from, for the sake of every bloody fuck, and they didn't want, they hoped we wouldn't, we did notice the cracks were not filled in at all. Not at all.

SETH:

(stepping out, holding a love letter)

I found this, I think this is for you, this is something that she wrote you, and left it on the counter.

On one night, on a rooftop, when we were looking over the city, we swore we could see for miles.

VIDEO

HER/V.O. JAMIE:

I was here at the end of all of this and I'll be here at the beginning—you are a spider web, a complicated frame, a monster, but you are not the only one and I kick the wall in my sleep every time you gloat, you are, yes surely, yes, magnificent, yes, but you're not the only one, we have had our fingers in each others' hair for the length and the width of the lives of the terrible innocents, the lives of all the children who were taken out before they had the chance to be sainted, before they had the chance to do the things that would make them sainted, we were wound around each other before the first of those, of those bones of children hit the red clay that remembers everyone, and this bone, the first one, the base of all the others, do you remember how, when my teeth found the back of your neck and we heard a crack? And every child after her, sometimes only fingers, sometimes only the fingers were found, sometimes a part of a leg, sometimes the head already cracked before it rolls into the cold, cold, crackling earth, sometimes the whole set of bones, the whole lost rattle machine, and every crack, every bone bend, each additional small weight added to the heap of baby bones, we were tangled in each others' branches, in each others' thorns, in each others' traceable roots, no one, you don't, not you, no one, you don't, owns the method of following roots back to their source—you are, have been, always already have, will, but your intellectual tradition on your head, that's your crown, and I am not will not am turning back the becoming of the eternal one who has that tradition of naively trusting—no. Wake up, you, all of you, your whole continent in your blood, wake up, that thunder is not your heart, that thunder is not your hidden lover, it's your own blood on your own hands, for myself, for my own self, my lonely own self, I am saying wake up and start naming, start finding, start naming calling finding new words for home, and the one, the most, the one thing we share more than whatever—your blood rains on your own house. Your own blood rains on your house. Happened to me.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

VIDEO

HER/V.O. BETH:

The reason they say walk a mile, walk a mile in someone else's show, the reason they say try to see it from her point of reference or so, the reason they say your perspective is old and you need a new one, it's not that it's, it's not that there is some, some homespun wisdom in it, not some homespun folksy wisdom in it, it's because this is what happens when you are dying.

That skin that thick skin the one you wish were as thin as everyone says it is, that skin you live in, that thick skin that is you that you can't breathe inside, not at moments like this, that skin is not a skin, that skin is a shirt, your skin is a shirt.

You're a hunter, tracking her like a hunter. It's an old, old trick. When you're hunting. To turn yourself. Into what you want. What you hunt.

But then, then, then, if you, if you become that, if you become that thing that you're hunting, you'll know, you'll know, what no hunter can know, because you will no longer be a hunter.

When you know the thing, the thing you hunt, from the inside, from the inside of that thing, you won't ever hunt again.

When you know that, you will never intentionally hurt any thing again ever.

Lay down the arrow, lay down the sword, dismantle all the firearms. The hunter is dead. You don't know what you are, just like everyone. You always were a starring role in your own love story. You were just reading the wrong part, memorizing someone else's lines.

BETHANNE:

You have been staring into a mirror, all your life. You have been staring into your reflection, all your life. You thought it was you, you thought you were seeing you. And it wasn't, and it's not, and it won't be you. You're looking into a mirror, and what you see, it won't be you. It's someone else. You're looking at someone else. You were always looking at someone else. You're not who you thought. You're not the one you thought you were. You're someone else.

(This is the last scene in this place. I still don't know where, though! Maybe it's a workout room? Oh, no, that would be stupid. Hey, but guys we should totally have a workout room in this play that would be awesome.)

Appendix E: The Play Texts

LIANA:

The problem here is that you are stuck in time.

(Pause.)

Are you asleep?

SETH:

I'm asleep.

LIANA:

We shouldn't sleep. We shouldn't waste any more time sleeping.

SETH:

I'm kidding, I'm not sleeping.

LIANA:

I think I will miss sleeping when I give it up all the way. But not so much that I would go forward again.

SETH:

Yes, me too, except the reverse. I wouldn't go back.

LIANA:

Right.

SETH:

Do you know how this works?

LIANA:

No.

SETH:

Let me finish. Do you know how it works, you, trying to go backwards, and me, trying to go forwards. We stopped something. Now we're here, where something is stopped. What happens here? How does this work?

LIANA:

I don't know what you mean.

SETH:

I mean, this is very short, then, is what I mean, because we're going in opposite directions, so this, this is very short.

LIANA:

You're very short.

SETH:

Ha. Ha.

LIANA:

I really really really don't know what you mean.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SETH:

What happens to people, one of them is trying to move forwards in time, and one of them is trying to move backwards in time, what happens when they meet, when they bump into each other and stop time, what happens then?

LIANA:

I think that's every love story.

SETH:

I don't know what you mean. That makes no sense. I don't trust love stories. I only trust fairy tales.

LIANA:

I think there's a fairy tale about that.

SETH:

Ok. Tell me the fairy tale.

LIANA:

Time is a river, it moves in all directions, and one day, he is going in one direction, and one day—

SETH:

—The same day.

LIANA:

The same day, yes, please don't interrupt, the same day she is going in another direction.

SETH:

And what happened?

LIANA:

You know what happened, they smashed into each other.

SETH:

And what happened?

LIANA:

You know exactly what happened, they talked for a long time about what would happen, would they go forward or would they go backward, or would they swirl around in a circle, a spiral, spinning forever, caught in a tide pool, never going anywhere ever again.

SETH:

And never caring ever again.

LIANA:

Exactly, never caring ever again.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

SETH:

And what happened?

LIANA:

You know exactly what happened, they were talking, and then she touched his face.

(She touches his face.)

And he stopped talking, and looked at her.

(He looks at her.)

And right after that, everything that ever happened in the world happened right after that. Everything in the world.

VIDEO

HER/V.O. JAMIE:

When I came back there were strands of seaweed stuck in my hair and I was growing barnacles on my side and I was too inside out, and didn't want to let the world with its bloody molars at me, but there you go. And it wasn't like these accidents of birth can ever be softened by anything more anything less than a return to the source—and there you are again. You see where I'm going. They start in the kidneys—oh that's wrong—I mean it's true, but it's not literal. Lower back one on each side—one says I'm your mother, one says, and the other one, the other mother one says, And so, so, so am I, no, she says, so am I—and hm. And hm. Hm. I'm your mother and you forgot, and here's a list because you forgot, this never was a rough winter, the winter was is will be that, that is, that is, not rough. Not the weather. But you. What will happen to you? Devastating.

HEATHER/ATHENA:

(Constructing a sculpture of him, with wire and string.)

They look and they keep looking, and when they look, you see yourself, in their eyes, you're that sparkle in their eyes, you're reflected in the sparkle, if you can get that close. It's hard for anyone to get that close, though.

And then one day, they stop looking, the day they recognize themselves, they stop looking. It happens over and over, they stop.

Look.

There's a story, a fairy tale, this girl that lived in a castle, locked away in a castle, her father had a mean streak, her mother had died when she was young, or perhaps the other way around. Sometimes it's the other way around, there are variations in this story.

She was locked away, and no one could see her, except there is this spell, this spell on her, it's on the whole kingdom, really, everyone suffers under this spell.

When she is dancing, her image appears beneath the eyelids of anyone who wants, who desires, who has an impossible hunger. That's when she's visible.

In order to make herself visible, then, she dances all the time, because she feels so invisible, up there, locked away, that she dances all the time, so she can be seen by someone, anyone, even if it's only under their eyelids.

Appendix E: The Play Texts

She has sisters, step sisters, three step sisters, one is always drunk, one is always fighting, and one who has all the memories in the world at her disposal. Oh, and she also has a twin, a twin sister, who died and became an angel, an angel who tries to undo the things that we do in the world to make it go out. To make the light of the world go out.

The twin sister is a ghost, then, but we're all ghosts here.

And then there's one day she gets out of the tower, sometimes there's a prince involved, sometimes she finds a secret passage, sometimes there's a deal she makes with the dead, the spirit of her mother or her twin sister or someone, anyway, one day she gets out.

And sometimes it's the prince, or sometimes it's someone in the town, someone of humble birth, say, and they meet face to face, and it's like a love story.

But it's not a love story.

He can't see her. He can't look at her and see her. This is what they find out, that when they're face to face with her, they can't see her.

He only loves her when she is dancing underneath his eyelids, but he can't see her when she isn't dancing, not because she isn't there, but because his eyes are cloudy from what he thinks he sees when he looks at her.

He loves her reflection when she's inside his head, when she's outside his head, face to face with him, he understands that what he loves isn't her, but how she is in his head, which is to say, himself, he loves himself, he sees himself in the image of her he has in his head, and outside of that, he cannot deal with it at all, he doesn't know how.

And it's not a love story about him, this isn't a terrible love story about how it went wrong with him, because there are others, she meets others, she and he separate and she meets others, there are so many others, and every time, it's the same story. It's not a love story. It's like a love story. It's like a love story but it ends when she discovers that she is more invisible than she ever could imagine.

In some versions, she hides, she goes back to the tower, in some versions, she stops dancing forever and dies of a broken heart, and in some versions, in this version.

This is a story about how we got lost, you went into the underworld and died, and I got caught, dancing in a mirror, and while we were suffering, we were so caught up in our suffering that we didn't notice that we had been set free.

You stopped carrying me in your head, and you stopped thinking about your own suffering, for just long enough, it was just long enough to round out the corners of this hard world, so that I would have the chance to tell you:

I'm in love with her, too, and have been looking for her, too.

She's not me, I'm looking for her, too.

She whispers to me, when I sleep, why don't you worship me any more?

And I whisper back, we worship you, but we just can't find you. But I saw you, once, on a roof top.

We really don't know what we are.

NDOFPLAYENDOFPLAYENDOFPLAYENDOFPLAYENDOFPLAYENDOFPLAYE

Appendix F: The Ghost Lounge: Performance Text

Note: This is for the more curious reader who may want to follow along while watching The Ghost Lounge video, in order to more closely approximate the viva performance. This was my script for the performance.

Key to fonts:

This one indicates spoken text.

This one is not spoken; this font indicates a note to myself during the performance.

This font means it is spoken simultaneously with text on the video.

Begin video

START SPEAKING AT HOW I LOST YR MOTHER

when i met her, it turned me inside out, like light was being pulled from shadow, only they could never be separated, and i understood, but couldn't put it into words then, that rebirth is not unusual, but something that happens every day, whenever elementals meet, that rebirth is the rule and not the exception.

Dubek explained, "So, that feeling you get when you're lost watching waves, or feeling the rhythms of the breath of someone sleeping next to you, that feeling, the things that escape through the cracks that hold reality together...to me, art can never capture this. And bad art thinks it has captured this. And good art tries to capture this and fails. And my favorite, my very favorite, is when art captures that sense of the impossibility of the capture."

(this should be up to schwartzenegger)

Getting ready to go far away. The dog, spirited, inspired, a spirit dog, grabs broken things, things dotted with blood, and puts them into my pack. I don't need these things, I say. Haha haha, says the dog, when you travel to homelands the first thing you pack are those things of grieving. But they're broken, I say. They're not broken, they work, she says, they work like a charm.

That song of the sea that sings to me: you will go into the world and you fall through holes in the world and you will die. And so will everyone you love. You will lose your father and you will be the father or the mother or the lover that

Appendix F: *The Ghost Lounge*: Performance Text

someone will lose. And it will happen again and again and again. This makes most of you nervous, so you try to get numb or acquire things. But. If all you acquire is attention to your breath. You will start to see and feel the orchestration under it all. And you will come to know the things that mermaids know.

(this should take you to about where carla talks)

I showed my daughter pictures of the moon before she could even speak. When she saw it for real, for the first time, she was riding on my shoulders, wiggling like crazy, and she said the word, over and over. Moon. That's how I felt when I first got to New York. This thing that existed in so many versions, it wasn't just a word, and it means something different to everyone, and I get to have it mean something to me. This thing is not a dream, this thing is real, and that's the mystery. We are waking up and falling asleep in that mystery, as if every place on earth is the fruition of a dream our ancestors had for us.

Note to self: release new Afro-Cuban exercise video, Pilates of the Caribbean.

Someone once told you something and it wasn't true but you believed them. You can't believe the living, like you, they are always confused by all the mirrors. But when you remember the dead, you hear things, and when you listen the dead tell us who and where we were, are, and will be.

you slipped through the cracks between one year and the next, feeling as though they couldn't find you when they were filming your academy-award winning scenes. the things that once made you so melancholic now remind you that things are unfinished, but still whole, themes are resolved but still likely to recur, and salt on skin from tears or from sweat is what this life tastes like. although you may not recognize how gracious this year has been to you, you can't deny that when you move with your breath that you are as graceful as anyone who ever danced on the surface of the world, and your best moments happened off camera.

after Isis, complete blackout right before
Heather

Wake up in warm rain, on a day when you are made of clay, just soft enough to be formed into the thing you have been becoming, almost ready to be put to the fire.

The dead came singing, just outside the window by my head, and I could not sleep at all, but I feel like I slept by the sea and there is salt on my skin. We passed through the summer. We made it through the fire. We misplaced parts of ourselves that we didn't want to be. They come singing. You always look so sad in

Appendix F: *The Ghost Lounge*: Performance Text

photographs, but here in this moment your eyes are bright and you are free, you escaped capture, and your mouth is a cave, and when you sing we hear the dead and the living echoing against your grateful fiery bones.

there were lots of stars and i tried to follow them all, and i liked the sudden ones and the chaotic ones or the twinkling ones the best, and i was always trying to write my name and our stories on them in some secret place, but when i stopped following anything, i started to notice that they had been writing on me, writing a story on me, and it didn't burn me, but set me on fire, not a sudden fire, nor chaotic, nor twinkling, but a soft and steady white light; wild in the eyes, soft in the heart, we get born to tell each other stories.

(this should be up to r&j/void)

Too much city and there's too much information and not enough knowledge to funnel that information. Go back to the woods and remember what you were taught, go back and learn how to listen to plants and stones. Go back to the woods. There was never a lack of knowledge.

The very last thing my grandfather told my grandmother was the beginning of the love story that I would one day swim in.

You keep going back, you are sure there's something in one of those rooms in one of those cities, something that holds the secret to unlock this, to make time behave, to make this speak in tongues you understand. But the secret was never really secret, just hidden right here. You didn't miss any grand finale, you didn't sleep through the big confession, you didn't lose anything that you really needed. You know how to walk through fire, to slow your heart during the cold, and you know a thing or two about magic. You haven't missed a trick. But if you keep going back looking for the key you might just miss it when it reveals itself in the forward fold of time.

The grief for the ones who came before, for the ones who left the weave of the fabric much too soon, it turns into an open heart that hears the love song of the dead for the living: take care of each other, feed each other in dark times, and make more light.

It seems as though everyone eventually starts to look a little bit like Leonard Cohen.

(hold for all of seth,)

Appendix F: *The Ghost Lounge*: Performance Text

The shore to the sea: oh what you do to me, I love what you've done what you're doing and what you're going to do, and it doesn't matter if you don't believe me, just look at me, it's written all over me, oh what you do to me

In the shadow of the moon, I was thinking about the loss of our dogs, the dogs of our fathers, and forgetting that magic happens in the dark or in the light. In the light of the moon, old friends they come back, from under the lip of the sea. I live in the shadow and under the light of the moon. There is always more that's hidden. And I always hear dogs barking, even if I can't see them.

When gorgeous faeries come dancing on your doorstep, asking for a kiss before midnight, open the door.

The moon is a waterfall in your spine and the sun is lighting up your skin and fingernails and you are made of the stars you see and you are telling the story you are in and there aren't enough days to say all of its versions but you will try anyway because this is love this is love

on the train, staring without getting caught, trying to find out if anyone here has a clue of what it was like to waltz before the war.

at 12:24 the writing again , work fevered pace Up to the next writing bit and caracol

woke up fevered, from this place: on the banks of where we go back to the place we were before, there is a holding area, everyone waits, and all of the things you lost in your life are brought back to you. the ones who are the most attached to things are the most sentimental, and they cry, not because they missed the things, but because they realize that someone or something was paying attention to their sadness after all. the ones who have lost touch, they cry, too, not because of the things, but because their memories have come back to them, and they missed memory the most. and then there are ones who have stayed unattached, but still managed to stay in the world, all the way in the world, and they do not cry at all, they are not given anything back, because they never lost anything, because they understand that they already have everything in the world they could possibly need.

This year the ending year, brought up old crimes, the oldest crimes, enough to stir up the bones, the oldest bones, from the bottom of the ocean. And those bones, the oldest bones, float to the surface, but can't keep us from drowning they can't, but if we listen to those old bones, the oldest bones, they teach us how to swim.

Appendix F: *The Ghost Lounge*: Performance Text

Grandparents, their children, and the children's children, all watching the waves, watching the bones rolling in the waves, and remembering, remembering, remembering. Now there are monsters, now the children are seeing monsters, and the parents see themselves, and the grandparents just start weeping, weeping, weeping. Those monsters were supposed to be gone by the time the grandchildren came into the world, but here they are, they're right here, they're still right here.

Your heart just wants the broken things, it thinks it can fix the things that are fallen. Your heart wants to be the clock to turn things back to the moment you lost the one you lost a thousand lifetimes before. Your heart is a wild dog that no one will ever really know because you won't let anyone get close enough. Your heart is the rough slouching beast you came here for, not to catch but to tame just long enough so you could ride it.

I was at an intersection and it was flooded and there was nothing to do but wait. I was thinking about how we are programmed for destruction, how we are programmed for creation, and how every once in awhile someone shows up to teach us how to change that program. But there was more, there was something else that was written in between my fingerprints. Some promise. Some important promise that I keep forgetting. It was placed in my head when I was born, and I was born in and through love. Only in and through love would I remember it.

I felt the moon pulling at my teeth and tickling my spine until I trembled and I was sure I trembled all night, but when I woke up I saw that I had not moved an inch. I was traveling all night for sure, riding on the moon like a horse, traveled clear out of my body. And when I went out into the morning, a morning born on a hot breeze, this all looked beautiful, the kind of beauty that happens when something gets made new. And I heard the moon, 'what of this was ever promised as permanent?' And I thought, 'yeah you got me there, moon.' But I thought some more and here is my real answer: If the teeth in my head stick around anywhere near as long as the stones then there is something that bears the traces of every 'I love you' I ever said.

The perfect balance, of light and shadow, the moment when you are lying perfectly still on the water's surface, before it cracks around your silhouette and pulls you under.

it will turn you inside out and make you want to open all the doors and windows and make you want to hide inside a cave outside the city and it will break all of your mirrors and erase all of your memories and it will haunt you in the middle of the night and the middle of the day and it will stop your heart and shatter it but, there will come a day when love finally makes you calm

Appendix F: *The Ghost Lounge*: Performance Text

end of old r&j beginning of new

She had a mirror in her mouth that told me things I wanted to hear, and they were always true but I didn't always believe them, but, like so many children of sirens, I got caught up in the details of weaving spells and missed the moment when she filled with light and turned into a river of fireflies.

1. there is a man in my living room teaching me how to resuscitate someone when their heart stops beating. he explains that the heart is protected by skin and muscle and bone and cartilage, and very hard to get to, it's so deep. he looks through me and says that he sees an extra layer of barbed wire. it is surprising to me. he says that everyone is surprised when they find out they have this. i ask him if it's common, and he tells me that yes everyone has it, but you only find out about it when someone else gets in there so deep they get cut, and they don't understand why they are bleeding.

2. when he closes his eyes, he pretends that the shower is a rainstorm, because it is starting to smell like spring. when he closes his eyes, he sees silhouettes of birds flying everywhere, and he understands that he has been given a blessing that is outside of human language.

3. they are reading several books at once, and still they are surprised that their lives are like complicated novels, that their lives are like small but elegant poems, that their lives are like transcriptions of creation stories from a lost oral tradition. they are surprised that the music of the spheres comes from convergence and dissonance, in patterns as complicated and unknowable as the histories of their hearts.

i wake up too early and the dog is already up, at my computer, with a bowl of popcorn. 'what are you doing?' i ask her. 'watching the movie of your life, it's so beautiful, especially lately,' she says. 'are you joking, i feel like i'm a hundred years old.' 'oh, no,' she says, 'that's not at all what's happening,' she says, 'you bump into so many interesting people, and the main characters are so beautiful when they are waking up, and when you all lose the plot, that's just my favorite thing in the world.'

when winter came back, i was like a shadow, hardly seen, holding things that were as small as moments, like precious stones, in my shivering hands, in love with a world that i would never understand

The world is a forest and we are made of a swath of shadows and when our hearts are light our hearts are lights and sometimes we don't even recognize each other until we have left each other's sight.

Appendix F: *The Ghost Lounge*: Performance Text

persephone is putting another pomegranate into the juicer. you get used to the dark, she says, but i still wake up to the sound of my own heart thundering in my chest, thinking the sound is you coming home.

caracol falls around 18:00

Speak simultaneous:

I was looking for the footprints of Tadeusz Kantor on the streets of Kraków and came back with more ghosts than I could hold. They are still falling out of my head whenever I pay attention to blinking. And this, this particular and personal Forefather's Eve is a little bewildering, shadows of 16th century mystics and the smell of yesterday's rain on sage, and me with impossible wishes to have just one more conversation with my father.

BY ROBERT POSSESSION

As long as you are able to fall in love with the theme that is your life, every variation is magic when it plays

Having chased a falling star was not enough, we eventually caught it and ate it, and we glowed from the eyes, and we glowed from our centers, and the price of eating a star was this: our hearts are softer and we are prone to weeping and laughing; we give ourselves away and we are not so very unique; unimaginable beauty does not surprise us, every moment being inside a lunar cycle of constant revelation.

remember that feeling you had for the first time when you were riding in the car with your parents, going up north for the first time, after a long summer, and you all stopped for gas, and when you got out of the car, the cool air and that smell hit you for the first time? and do you remember when it was tuesday and it was march and it was this morning and you had that same feeling and it wasn't for the first time except it's always for the first time? and repetitions and reminders of the first time always feel like the first time and maybe that means that this is really always the first time this time this one here is always the first time

by jamie waiter read this sloooow

the sound of the storms and then the smell of wet desert and wet pavement, it brings you back, that time, you were sixteen, standing in a parking lot with your friends, cloves and reunite lambrusco, and you were anxious, where would you be

Appendix F: *The Ghost Lounge*: Performance Text

in a year from now, you don't know how this works, you were anxious; and you remember now like you remember then, everything is about to change, but, we need to watch out for each other, whoever is we, we are all children of water and we need to watch each other's backs; you spend the first part of this thing trying to navigate a sea that you don't understand, and now, here, you don't know how this works, but you know that you aren't trying to find your way back home, you're aiming toward getting lost in the ocean, and finding home there, or rather here, always here right here

hold until jamie and steve start

these two philosophical dogs, sitting on the edge of the sea, watching a storm coming in, and one says, 'this is all one version of reality that we can choose to accept or not accept, and we can decide not to play by the rules of this particular game,' and the other one says, 'i think we will both be much more interesting in a few minutes when that version of reality is threatening to drown us.'

pause for i can't stop

you're back in that city twenty years later. all of the traces of you are hard to find, but they're there. there are other versions of your circles in the cafes and the galleries and waiting on the corners. when you look for familiar things, familiar things start to show traces, but this won't be easy. you have to decide which traces to follow, based on the ghosts that haunt you the most, or the gestures that feel incomplete.

pause for 'see how you like it'

a love song from the dead to the living, and a love song from the living to the dead. bright as three suns, dark as the other side of the moon. when i think of you my heart beats faster. i'm sitting in the dark, where i can't tell the ghosts from the living, watching my dreams and feeling like i am witnessing something, not the beginning nor the end of the world, but something far outside of that, outside of that space where such things even matter.

by heather with the mirror:

some of us make art to bring light to hidden angles that make sense to us, and we want to be as specific as possible, because someone else might one day say, 'that thing you saw, i've seen it, too, i've been there, too, and i felt the way you felt when you were there,' because this is either a dream, or based on a dream, that

Appendix F: *The Ghost Lounge*: Performance Text

we had, and if we're living in it, then everything we ever wanted is not so far from reach.

Love is standing perilously close to the edge of the world, love is the breath between the moment and the narration of that moment, love is a tea ceremony, a furry thing crawling in through the dog door, a cracked cup and a playlist of 80s fitness hits, love wakes you up or keeps you up or touches your forehead until you sleep, a dream and a grave and a story about you.

A falling star when it's already sunrise, that splits open a rock like a knife made of lightning and gives birth to a snake born whispering two dead languages, or maybe, just maybe, it just gives birth to this, this morning, brunch in some cafe that has sesame in the name and they only serve herbal tea and soy milk and it would still be all right. Because every time I walk into a room with her I feel a little bit taller, love's definitions keep adding to the story of the first love, the one where the star loved the idea of us so much it just exploded, remember that? I mean I remember that I mean that star that star remembers us uh huh

jamie should be here

Now I remember. Something about the light here, the water so close here, and the almost rain here, that makes the line so thin, the line between my daydream and everything else in the world.

AFTER robert talking about TV possession

I was talking to the rain, trying to explain that I understood why it falls, and still had no idea what it was doing to the earth beneath the surface. The heart isn't a mystery, or a poem, just a warrior learning how and when to make a decision. "The first thing you need to know," it says, "is that there are some who never leave the forest."

Brass-belt Doggess tells the Moonstruck Dog, "Your eyes burst open with salt water because the sea is moving through you, unclench your fists and unwrap your lips from your teeth, that music you are pretending not to hear, it's really playing and you're really hearing."

These gifts you get when you come into the world, the eyes and the teeth and the bones in the hands and the smell of everything that you are, these things that you leave at the door on the way out of the world, and before all of these and after all of

Appendix F: *The Ghost Lounge*: Performance Text

these there is hearing and there is breath, and it's no wonder this life is a song this love is a song this dream was and is a song.

Six months after the storm, and the beach was still littered with so many of his things: military jacket, a book on Gandhi, a cane he carved, a bird feeder. I started to loosen my scarf, started to unbutton my coat, started to unclench my fists, and I could see that I was changing. There were feathers sprouting from my chest. The same thing used to happen to him when he was happy.

with writing

When she ordered a glass of salt water, I knew this was the beginning of a great adventure.

God is the smile of that beggar, the shaking anxious dog, the father who rocks you to sleep, the mother who puts you together and takes you apart, the breath that connects, the last breath, no breath, the whisper in the desert, and the teeth on the back of the neck that turns you into an object of desire.

by me being lacan

Seven trains just crossed tracks in thirty seconds, intersections of relations and geographies and world views, and no one is orchestrating. This was once a story written by Borges, this is a video from the last album by a pop singer no one has heard yet, this is the secret sign that points north on a map that no one uses yet.

quiet for robert

by caracol

when i woke up, with my unique problems waiting for me at the foot of the bed, there was something about the light this morning, and i could see past their shadows, that they were not unique, nor were they problems, and that everything i thought about had been considered a thousand times before. this world is a bus station, lines of thought and feeling are well-traveled, these things have a long line of ancestors, someone has been here before and worked their way through this before, and my stubbornness to be original stopped me from hearing the stories about how this all works, stopped me from seeing connecting threads everywhere, a thousand different colors of thread in thousands of directions everywhere.

Appendix F: *The Ghost Lounge*: Performance Text

hotel athena

Those ghosts of winter come turning the desert back to sea, with all the kinds of mermaids, little goth girls and banshees included, angels of grief and hunger all of them. Death runs in our bloodlines, and every death wakes up the old dead, who tell the living, There is not a single one of you who is not made up of drops of every single one of us.

She lifts the lip of the river like it's a sheet, and I can see so many bones. I had no idea, so many bones. You only see this at certain times of year, and this time is about to close. Already there are more waves coming, they sound like music, and she can't hold the sheet much longer. Ok, I say, bring the music up, I've seen enough, let the music swell, let the music swell.

hold

by seth & liana sweet scene:

everyone has a bird or two in their chest, but almost everyone is afraid of flying. you'd have to give up seeing what you want to see and what you saw in trade for seeing what is right in front of you. you'd have to give up trying to be who you think they want you to be. you'd have to give up remembering only the things that happened to you in exchange for remembering what happened to all of us. you'd have to exchange your yesses and nos for perhaps. you'd have to give up all the things that you no longer need.

When he looks at her, he is lost in blue, and is inside the storm at high tide, and as safe as a dog under a bed on a night of fireworks. I haven't thought about the Holy Grail since I was 17 years old, he says, since I stopped praying to things I couldn't see.

on the day the chameleon god of music died, all the changeling artists felt a sliver of rainbow glass enter their hearts, and the anchor points for all their mystical selves got loosened. there is never a lack of persona. it was always a fine time to become something else. but on the day the chameleon god of music died (tschüssi, thin white duke xxx), they tasted that sweet sadness of the in between things, how delightful and strange this is, oh, you pretty things.

I want to be known as the Roberto Benigni of the biker community.

I am cleaning the table next to where dad sleeps. There are a few teeth, old skin, and some feathers. "Dad," I say, "I totally forgot that you knew how to do that."

Appendix F: *The Ghost Lounge*: Performance Text

He is starting to look over his shoulder, ready to leap. He says, "We have different gods, but they know a lot of the same secrets."

by heather's last mono:

there was that father's day, where all the fathers, living and dead, got together to figure out which fears were really theirs, and which ones were inherited from another time, from other fathers, and other gods. and they found that none of those fears really belonged to them any more. and they stopped arming themselves against enemies that existed only in their heads, and they stopped teaching their children to make themselves appear larger than they really were, and they stopped talking to the gods they didn't believe in. when they stopped talking, they started to hear things, things from the water, stories about what happens to children who are not afraid, and in this way, the fathers were remembered, put back together as something we all forgot they were, something extraordinary but forgotten, woven into their fabric from the very beginning.

Even though she turns to salt as soon as he lifts his head from the pillow, he still talks to her, he hears her and she hears him, so he says to the ground beneath his feet, Yes, you're right, the air doesn't fall in love with the earth, they were always in love, there never was any falling, it was always like that and will always be just like that.